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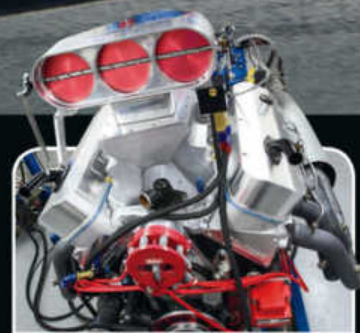
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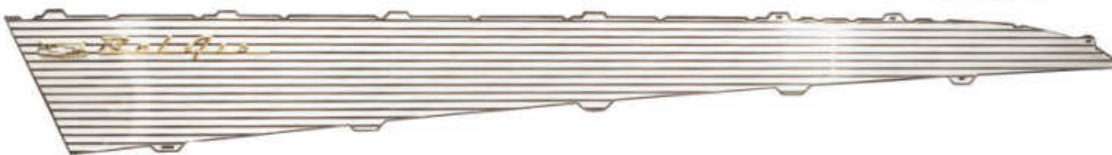


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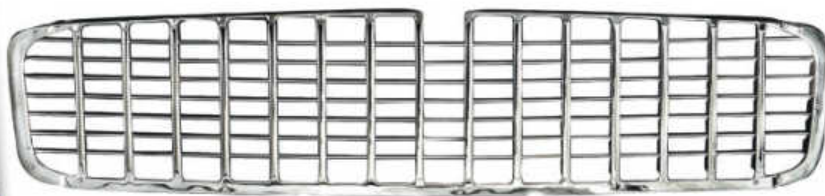
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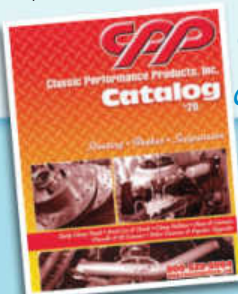
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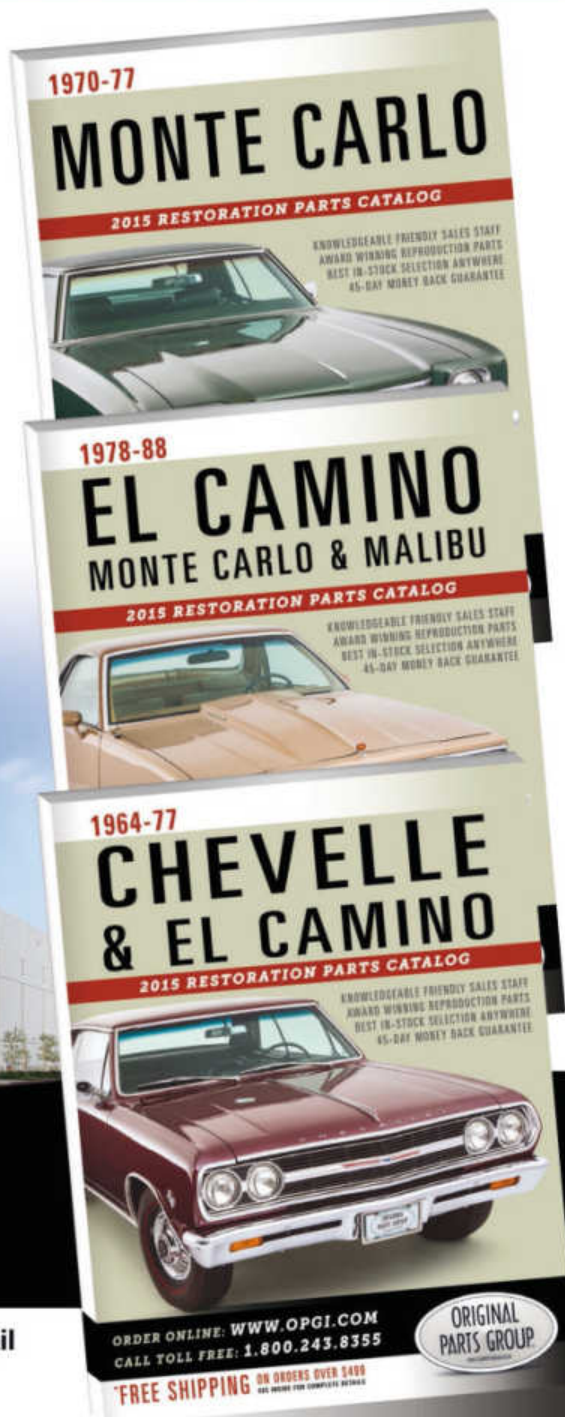
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HOW DO YOU BEGIN A PROJECT?

I've had well into the double digits of cars at this point in my life – most them projects.

And, with every new machine that's passed through my stable, I've learned something new. Whether it was some random fact about a particular model, a skill gained from conquering a previously un-attempted task, or sometimes – more like often – a way not to do something. I've never walked away from a project un-humbled. But, at the onset of every new car, I still find myself at a crossroad of uncertainty. What should I do first?

The engine? The suspension? What about bodywork? Should I keep the car drivable and tackle mini-projects one at a time or blow the car apart, rebuilding it piece by piece until it is perfect? There are so many ways to begin, it is hard to be certain the best course of action.

My usual approach is the latter, disassembling the car piece-by-rusty-piece, doing my best to label and catalogue each component, praying I don't lose anything as I go – a sheer impossibility. From there I'll tackle individual systems, such as brakes, engine, transmission, etc., until I have a machine ready for the road.

While this paradigm has worked countless times, I can't help but wonder if I am missing out on something by not getting the car drivable as soon as possible and tackling the build in stages. It would sure be a neat change to be able to feel the difference in the car's overall performance as each aftermarket component gets thrown into the mix. For example, a rack-and-pinion steering may not feel like a huge improvement if you haven't been commuting back and forth with a tired manual steering box. And how can you truly appreciate a modern, gas-charged coilover when you haven't experienced the teeth-jarring ride quality of old-school air shocks. Could driving our old Chevys in their as-is state be the key to truly understanding just how far automotive technology has come?

As I gear up to start work on my 1963 Chevy II Nova, I'm curious to know how others tackle their project cars. Do



you go for broke with a massive rebuild or keep the car on the road, making small improvements as you go? What if the car has no drivetrain upon purchase? Is the goal to get it cruising as soon as possible regardless of the condition? Or do you patiently hone the body till it shines and sparkles before hitting that local cruise night. Let me know, I'm eager to hear how our readers, whose expertly crafted rides I've seen at so many shows, plan out their attack strategies!

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1955: THE SMALL-BLOCK'S FIRST YEAR DEBUTED A DOZEN DIFFERENT CUSTOM VALVE COVER STYLES FOR SALE



If ever there was a prophecy that came true it was in the January 1955 edition of *Hot Rod* magazine in an article titled “Analyzing the Chevrolet V8,” where *HRM* tech editor, Racer Brown said “from all indications the new V8 will be with us for a long time.” We’ll bet not in Racer’s wildest dreams could he have ever imagined that by late November 2011 there would be over 100 million small-block engines produced.

By mid-1955, the diminutive, yet quite powerful, Chevy V-8 was nicknamed “mighty mouse” after a contemporary TV cartoon show. Shortly thereafter, numerous dress-up items appeared on the market, made to complement a fast-expanding array of speed equipment coming available.


A good example, custom valve covers were amongst the most popular dress-up items introduced by speed

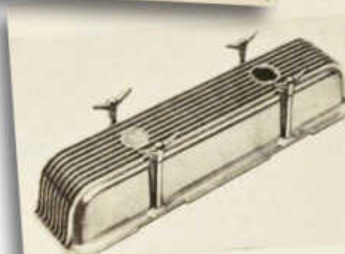
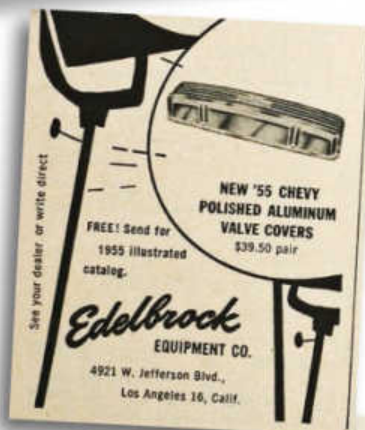
equipment companies. In the July 1955 edition of *Hot Rod*, Racer Brown wrote an article titled “Bolt On 83 Easy Horsepower,” featuring a 265 with three deuces on an Edelbrock intake manifold and Edelbrock’s new, finned-aluminum valve covers.

Even Chevrolet got into the act when it introduced special finned-aluminum valve covers for the first year in a V-8 ‘55 Corvette. At first, the Corvette valve covers had nine fins and then went to seven. The valve cover gasket had a dual bolthole pattern that provides a 1955-‘59 staggered pattern

and a 1960-up even bolt pattern. The 1960 switch to an even bolt pattern meant aftermarket specialty manufacturers had to slightly retool existing

molds. Notice on the Cal Custom finned-aluminum valve covers the extended wing nuts look great thanks to even bolthole, spacing.

During the course of researching this article, Eric Blakely and Smitty Smith at Edelbrock confirmed the company has produced well in excess of one million Edelbrock finned-aluminum valve covers since they debuted in 1955. 



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THIRD TIME'S



Joe Bidwell Evan Perkins

Early on in life, Ohio-born Ron Greulich birthed what has turned into a lifelong infatuation with the automobile in a rather innocuous way — by building model cars as a young child. By the time he reached his senior year of high school, that infatuation had him walking into the Chevrolet dealer, somehow having been able to save enough money at that young age to purchase a brand-new 1976 Camaro Type LT for

the then-princely sum of \$5,200.

What does a high school kid in the mid-'70s do with a brand-new Camaro?

"The first thing I did was buy a set of Cragar S/S wheels, and big fat tires for the back, that stuck out about an inch. I also put on air shocks and added Hooker 3-inch side pipes. Hey, it was the '70s!" says Greulich.

Just a couple of years later, he was bit by the '69 Camaro bug for the first time, and really started to dig into doing some of his own work. This car,

his second, was a freshly repainted '69 SS 396 that was purchased from the original owner for \$3,800. The car just needed a little TLC, and Greulich was up to the task.



S A CHARM

IT TOOK 30 YEARS FOR RON GREULICH TO APPEASE HIS APPETITE FOR **THE PERFECT PRO STREET '69 CAMARO**



"That car was my first so-called restoration," he says. The 396 was yanked and rebuilt, and while the engine was out of the car, the engine bay, inner fenders, core support, and firewall were refreshed with semi-gloss black paint.

At the time, the Car Craft Street Machine Nationals was the big thing going for aspiring hot rodders. Greulich attended the event four years running, from 1981-'84, driving the '69 Camaro to each year's festivities.

"I had never seen so many blown cars in one place before, so after the

1984 Nationals I sold the '69 to build a blower engine for my '76 — a 350 small-block with a Dyer's 6-71 on top," he says.

To this day, he wonders why he let that '69 go to build the '76 up, but he did. And that led him down the path of the Pro Street movement, which took hold in the mid-'80s and never really let him go. A move from Ohio to Tucson, Arizona, changed the automotive-related activities from a summer standby to a year-round obsession. The '76 came off the road for a four-and-a-half year



project to tub it — most of that time waiting on other people to perform the work — and a new engine went in, this time a BDS 8-71-blown 454.

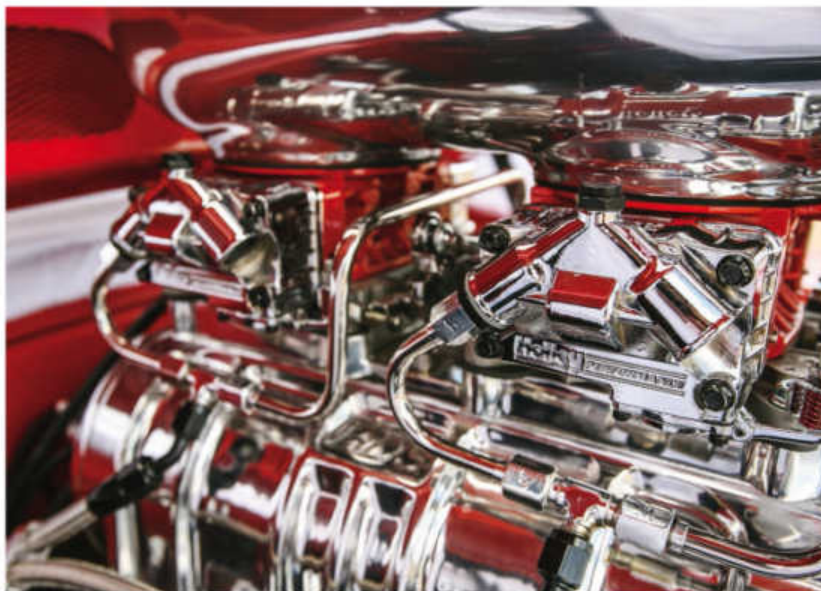


A few years later, while he was enjoying the '76, boredom set in, and his daily-driven pickup truck, a 1986 short-bed Silverado, became the next project to go under the knife for the Pro Street treatment. This time, instead of relying on others, Greulich did the work himself and cut the build time from 4 years to 10 months. The truck also received — you guessed it — a blown 502-cube big-block with an 8-71 on top and a set of Centerline big-n-little Convo Pro wheels.

So the Pro Street hook was set, and deep. For Ron Greulich, there was no getting away from that hook — and no forgetting the '69 Camaro he had unceremoniously pitched to the side of the heap years earlier.

"I always regretted selling the '69. It was my dream to have a Pro Street '69 with an 8-71 blown 454 big-block," he says. So a couple of years ago, the '76 Camaro and the Silverado went up for sale, and the proceeds were used to locate and procure the '69 RS Z/28 seen here, in what was perceived to be decent shape.

The car, an ex-drag race machine bought with an empty engine bay



from a Craigslist seller, was already back-halved. Greulich felt that purchasing a car with this done would save him some time. That idea quickly fell by the wayside when he realized that in order to fit the tire size he wanted to use, the rear wheel openings had to be stretched 2.5 inches and the rearend had to be narrowed

an additional 6 inches. At the same time, the rollcage that was already installed in the car was replaced with an 8-point rollcage from Art Morrison — to make a long story short, he had to basically start over.

In order to fit the monster 33x19.50 Mickey Thompson tires under the rear, the 9-inch Ford rearend was shortened

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to 39.5 inches in length and stuffed with 4.56:1 gears, a Trac-loc differential, Moser 31-spline axles, and fronted with a set of custom 36-inch-long ladder bars. QA1 coilover shocks and springs keep the rearend suspended, and SSBC brakes were fitted to the housing.

The stock style front suspension remains under the car, although 2-inch drop spindles were installed to get the

look just right. Again, QA1 shocks and springs are underneath, with SSBC 12-inch front brakes hiding behind the Centerline Convo ET wheels, measuring 15x4 in the front and 15x14 in the rear.

Underhood, the 468ci engine was machined by Gary's Machine in Tucson, and assembled by Greulich and friend Dan Ackerman. A stock 0.030-inch overbore block, stock crankshaft and reconditioned stock connecting rods

were used with Speed-Pro 8.0:1 pistons filling the holes. A hydraulic blower cam from Herbert has 0.550/0.565-inch lift and 285/280 degrees of duration at 0.050-inch lift. Pro Comp aluminum cylinder heads are on top, and the ignition is controlled by MSD.

The star of the show is the 8-71 BDS blower, sucking fuel through two 750-cfm Holley carburetors in true Pro Street fashion. The exhaust is



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BRAKES



SUSPENSION





comprised of 2-inch primary Hedman headers, 3-inch custom tubing, and Dynatech split-flow mufflers. Bob Metez assembled the Turbo 400 transmission, and Greulich selected a 3,000-stall Hughes torque converter to transfer the power.

Greulich put his skills to work again in the interior, using an American Autowire harness to completely rewire the car. Auto Meter Ultra Lite gauges, a Grant steering wheel, B&M Magnum Grip shifter, and PROCAR Elite 1100 seats complete the look. The carpet was completed by Chris Urbina at Quality Landau & Upholstery in Tucson. There is no radio, so that the shock and awe of the blown big-block can be appreciated at all times.

In order to get the exterior ready for paint, Greulich had to perform numerous cleanup tasks to achieve the look he was after.

"The previous owner had removed all of the exterior emblems, side marker lights, RS backup lights, and then welded up all of the holes. The rear tailpanel had so much Bondo where the backup light holes used to be that



it was easier to just replace the whole panel," says Greulich.

Finally, the BASF Diamont Inferno Orange hue, complete with Switchblade Silver metallic stripes, was laid onto the body refinished by Rick Harris, who also tuned up the body lines to get the car laser-straight. And now, Ron Greulich's Pro Street Camaro appetite is sated.

Two years and 2 months later, the car seen here rolled out of the garage. This time, instead of waiting on other people, Greulich finished most of the work himself — with a bit of help on the engine and paint — the only two processes he wasn't comfortable doing himself.

"Now I have my dream car, and I'm happy," he says. We bet this one won't get sold off! 📺

SPEC

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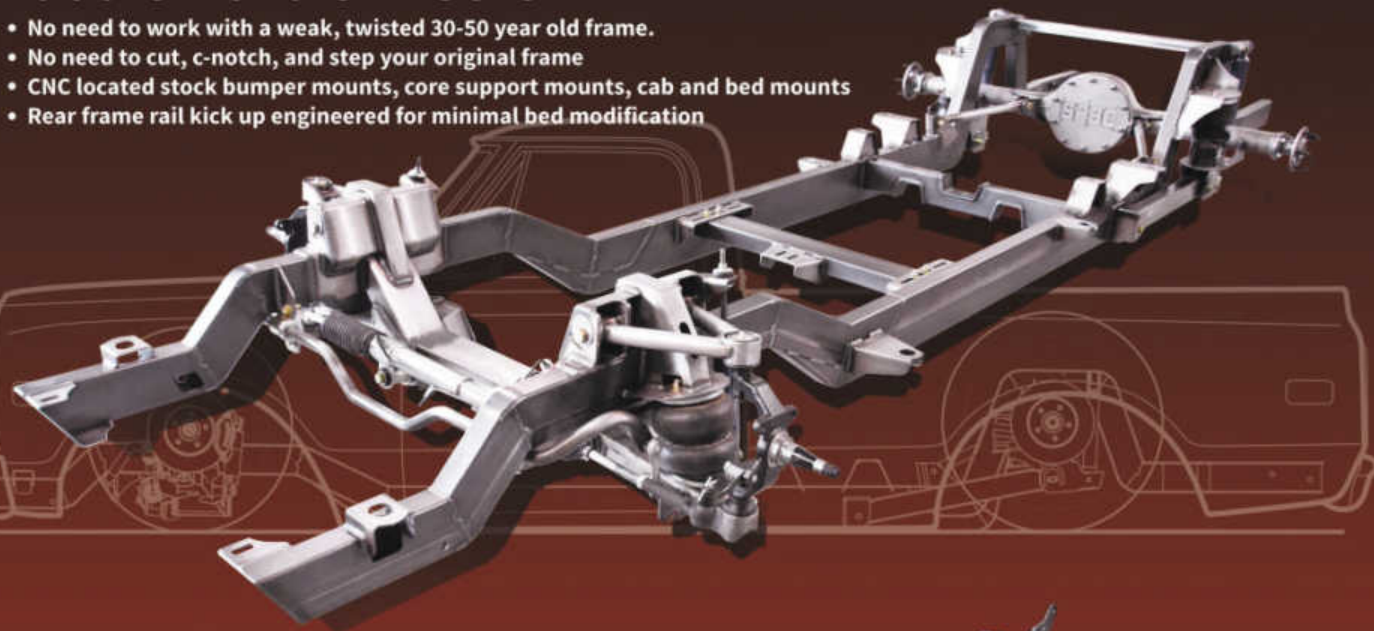
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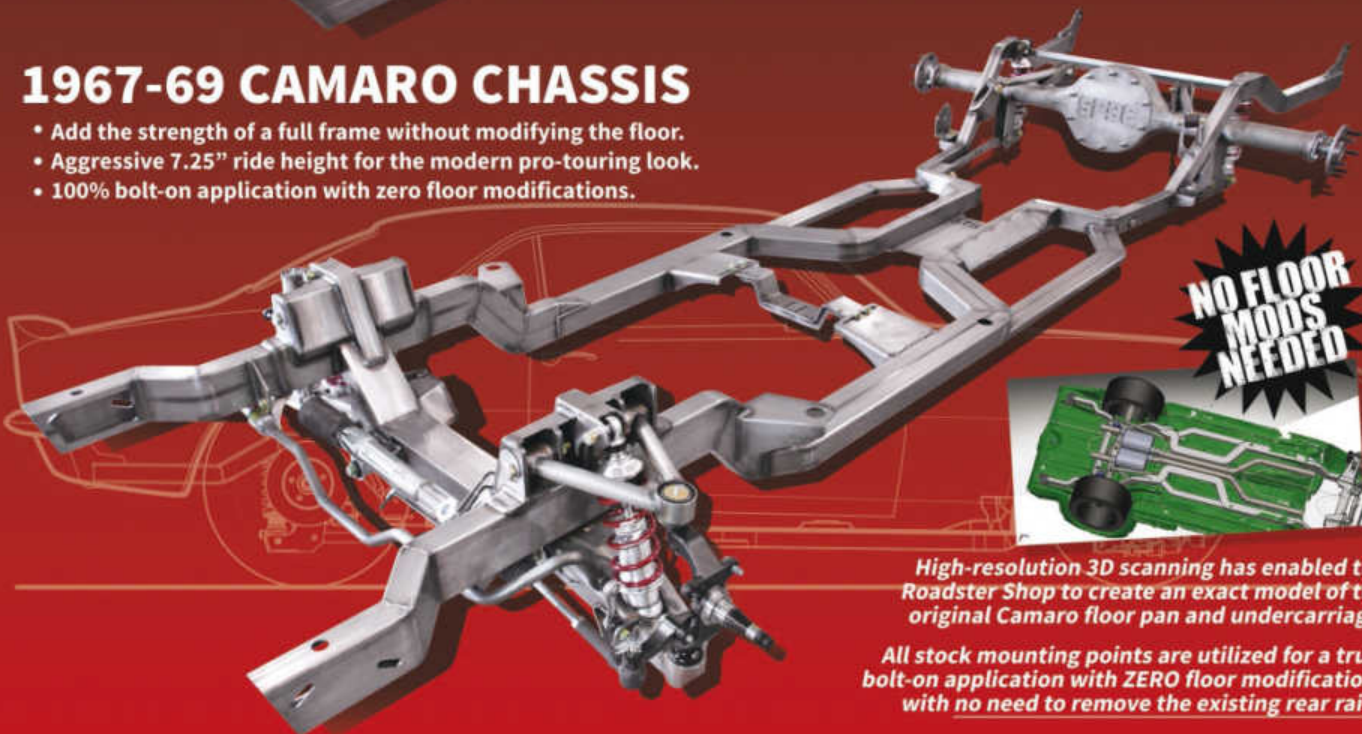
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WALK THE

THIS 1967 NOVA SS BUILT BY CPP SPANS
THE GAP BETWEEN STREET AND COMPETITION



LINE

by **Evan Perkins, Mary Pozzi** and **The Super Chevy Staff**

It was the year of the Nova at the 2015 Super Chevy Suspension & Handling Challenge presented by Falken Tire. However, even though six out of eight competitors brought out Chevy IIs, there was not a single car with even remotely the same approach to suspension design. Each had a unique method of bringing muscle car handling into the modern century. The first in a long line of features to come from the event is Classic Performance Products' (CPP) gorgeous 1967 Nova.

The car was built in-house at CPP's Placentia, California, facility by their team and then sprayed in flawless Corvette Monterey Metallic Red paint. While the team majorly thrashed to get the car together in time for the event, no detail was spared, and the overall quality of the car is not befitting of its rushed timeline.

Under the hood of the Nova is an Edelbrock Signature Series 383ci crate engine, fed by an MSD Atomic fuel-injection system. Power goes from the front to the back via a Bow Tie Overdrives 765R4 transmission and Currie 9-inch rear-end equipped with 3.70 gears and an Eaton Detroit Truetrac limited-slip. Intro Customs Nitro wheels shod in sticky Falken Azenis RT615K rubber, 225/40/18 front and 265/30/18 rear, make up the rolling stock, while a host of CPP suspension, steering, and braking components help that rubber stay firmly planted on the road.

We spoke to Jim Ries of CPP about those suspension components and why they chose the Nova as their foundation for the 2015 Super Chevy Suspension & Handling Challenge.

"We always look at our customer base and try to build

something that stays true to who we are," said Ries. "This car really highlights our products and our design is earmarked for the do-it-yourselfer and the guy at home."

The early Nova has always been a popular platform among Bow Tie enthusiasts due to its light weight and availability. The factory suspension however, was never designed to tackle high-speed corners or deal with sticky modern rubber like the Falken Azenis shoes it now wears. That's where CPP steps in.

"I think the early Nova, as classy as they are, had one of the worst suspension designs by GM during that era," said Ries. It was the economy car of that time; it was designed to be inexpensive. They came with a really heavy strut rod and a light-duty lower control arm – everything is just really bound up from the factory. It doesn't align well, it doesn't do a lot of things well.

To remedy the problem, CPP used one of their Pro-Touring Stage IV kits on the car, which is, essentially, all of the best components that CPP manufactures for the early Nova rolled into one kit. That same Pro-Touring kit can be purchased outright or split into stages as money and garage time allow. It features a steel crossmember that bolts in place of the troublesome factory strut rods, giving the car a modern lower control arm design that improves suspension geometry and rigidity. On the '67 Nova, this is paired with tubular upper and lower control arms, a coilover kit, a pro touring sway bar, modern Falken Azenis tires, and 13-inch big brakes to reign in all that speed.

At the back of the car, CPP's Pro-Touring Stage IV kit retains leaf springs, which are elegantly simple and extremely functional for a dual-purpose car. The Currie rear axle was treated to a sway bar and adjustable Viking shocks. A set of CPP trac-



WHAT MAKES IT HANDLE

Suspension Package: CPP Pro-Touring Kit – Stage IV

Front Suspension: CPP mini-subframe kit with upper and lower control arms [PN 6267TCA-ULK-B], front swaybar kit with billet mount upgrade [PN CP108U], rubber spring perches [PN 6267PCH-R], adjustable coilover kit [PN 6267COK-DA]

Steering: CPP 400 Series power steering box [PN CP50005NV]

Brakes: CPP 1 1/8-inch chrome master cylinder, adjustable proportioning valve [PN MCAPVDBU-118C], CPP 13-inch front big-brake kit [PN 6267SWBK-D13], and 12-inch rear big-brake kit [PN 9RBP12-38-5434R]

Rear Suspension: Pro-Touring sway bar kit with billet mount upgrade [PN 6472PTSBK], adjustable shock kit [PN TS703], rear leaf springs [PN 6267RLS-3D], CPP traction bars [PN 6267TB]

Tires: Falken Azenis RT615K 225/40/18 front, 265/30/18 rear

Wheels: Intro Custom Nitro 18x7 front, 18x9 rear





tion bars keep the car hooked up and prevent the leaf springs from deforming under hard acceleration.

The suspension setup that CPP chose is simple, affordable, and perfectly capable of taking its owner out to a track day/autocross and cruising home in comfort.

But enough about what it's made of! We handed the keys over to our ringer, Mary Pozzi, for her analysis of what the Nova could do and here's what she had to say about it.

MARY POZZI FROM THE DRIVER'S SEAT

For CPP, the Nova product line is entry-level and a hobbyist bolt-on type of



build. What's cool is these parts totally transform a car from something that would struggle to get around a corner to one that can definitely stick with the big boys.

Once on the track, however, things changed dramatically and I quickly realized just how important a shock adjustment ... or four ... made. My recommendation to go to a mid-point brought healthy support and the overall handling perked up a ton. I noted a huge improvement overall and the majority of "lateral delay" was eliminated. I did note, however, the steering to be somewhat sluggish, offering a floaty feel that made transitions for corner entry through track-out to be a bit numb. Turns needed to be well-prepared for to get through them smoothly. What was surprising was how good this car was in the tighter "Z" part of our Streets track. Even with the torpid steering response, I'm guessing the timing was synched between a turn of the steering wheel

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and a reaction from the front wheels that got me through this slower, tighter reaction in fine form. Either way, this car was the best of the bunch in the "Z."

The CPP Nova is pretty easy to drive and got around the track very well. All of the parts on this car complement well and it's good to see a build where the drivetrain didn't overpower the tires. My only recommendation here would be to ratio-down that steering to get a better response. I could move the car around when driven up to the limits but like others tested this day, a life of track performance isn't what this Nova was built for in present form. As part of my cool-down "Street Evaluation," I found the CPP Nova to be very pleasant and neutral. The slow steering commented on previously was a non-issue and all was good.

For those on a budget, think strongly in this direction as you get a ton of product for your buck. And, if you choose to have some

track or autocross fun, remember

you've got a huge array of steering ratio choices for your build.

That alone would make the transformation complete and not break the bank in doing so. 

HOW'D IT STACK UP?

	SLALOM AVERAGE SPEED	SKIDPAD LATERAL g's	ROAD COURSE LAP TIME
1967 CHEVY NOVA	46.0 mph	0.90 g	1:59.71
2015 CAMARO SS 1LE	46.2 mph	0.96 g	1:53.67

We put CPP's Nova through the wringer on the 420-foot slalom course, the Streets of Willow Springs road course, and the skidpad. And, because some of those numbers are a little ambiguous for those not familiar with the slalom or road course, we paired the car against a 2015 Camaro SS 1LE for comparison. The little Nova managed an extremely respectable 0.90 g's of lateral grip on the skidpad and hung right with the Camaro through the slalom. It was only on the big track that the Camaro and its complement of electronic nannies such as traction control and antilock brakes pulled ahead.



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STOCK CAR FEVER



THIS 1955 CHEVY GETS SOME HANDLING HELP FROM A BOBBY ALLISON STOCK CAR CHASSIS



✍️ Scott Sparrow 📷 Robert McGaffin

Al Accipiter is no traditionalist. He's far from it. In many ways he might be called an abstract artist when looking at his '55 Chevrolet. Sure, you can tell it's a classic upon first glance, but that's about as far as the literal interpretation can go. Once you look deeper, under the paint on the canvas, you'll discover you're not looking at a classic Shoebox at all. You're looking at what once was a full-fledged stock car, which was also used in the film *Days of Thunder*.

When producers Jerry Bruckheimer and Don Simpson teamed up with director Tony Scott to begin filming the movie along with Tom Cruise, many people in the NASCAR racing community were hoping for a hit. In some ways they got it, but what ended up as NASCAR's gain became a huge loss for Paramount Pictures. In fact, according to published reports, the movie did so poorly that it, in part, contributed to Paramount cancelling the four remaining movies of a five-movie deal with Bruckheimer, Simpson and Scott, who just five years earlier teamed with Cruise to film and produce *Top Gun*.

While some were convinced they would be watching "Top Gun on Wheels" when the film debuted in July 1990, what they got was a mix of southern culture, racing clichés, and a few good scenes, but that was okay with the folks at NASCAR and also the fans who paid to see the likes of Dale Earnhardt Sr., Rusty Wallace, Bill Elliott, and Darrell Waltrip race on Sundays – the sport they loved was finally recognized by people who otherwise could care less about "race'n and rubb'n."

It was also around this time that Accipiter, a recent transplant from the Northeast to North Carolina, began his transition from drag racer to circle track racer.

"I always loved racing, no matter what kind," Accipiter said. "When I moved here I ended up being exposed to a lot more stock car racing, and from that I got the bug," he laughed.

Like a lot of people, Accipiter saw *Days of Thunder* as a chance for NASCAR to go mainstream. Little did he know he'd one day be driving a car from the movie.



"It began life as a Buick," Accipiter says. "At some point it was wrecked (in the movie), and it ended up at Rick Hendrick's place. I had an itching to do something different and after working on a few very low-budget Cup teams, I needed something else," he said. Eventually, he got it.

In order to bring the sport to life on the big-screen, the Hollywood gang would need a lot of cars, and they found them rather easily. Most of the cars used in filming were retired Winston Cup or Busch Grand National cars, which had either been wrecked in an actual race or were no longer deemed useful. Once procured, most of these "movie cars" ended up at Hendrick Motorsports' shop outside of Charlotte, North Carolina. Hendrick, who served as Technical Advisor for the film, and his company would help maintain the stable before, during, and after filming. There were a lot of cars used in the filming and many, as one would expect, were wrecked.

The journey for Accipiter's unconventional Shoebox actually began long before the movie was filmed. The chassis was built at Stavola Brothers Racing and campaigned by Bobby Allison carrying the number 12 and Miller High Life livery before Allison had his career-ending accident at Pocono Raceway in June 1988.

When NASCAR announced the creation of the now defunct Sportsman Series in the late 1990s, Accipiter began looking for a car to field in the new series. He found it at Hendrick's place. "I knew they were selling a lot of the old movie cars over there, so I went on over and for no reason I can remember, bought the Western Auto car used in the movie," he laughed.

The car, of course, had been wrecked, but the damage to the front clip wasn't enough to keep new life from being



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breathed into it. It took awhile, but Accipiter eventually straightened the car out, hung Oldsmobile sheetmetal on it and then procured a former 358-inch "Cup" mill from veteran NASCAR engine builder Noah Brown. That same engine powers the car today and stands as a testament to Brown's abilities. It has never been disassembled in the 20-years of racing and cruising. "The only thing I've done is swap the intake and carb, change oil, and adjust the valves – other than that, the engine is exactly as it was when he built it for the race car all those years ago," Accipiter said.

The car never performed that well in the Sportsman series. It struggled in qualifying due to the amount of time it took to get the engine up to a maximum operating rpm. "By the time we got it cranked up, the qualifying lap was just about over," Accipiter said. "The engine would eat, but it needed long green flag runs in order for it to really shine," he added. In competition, the car did manage to finish as high as 11th place three times. A year or so later, the series was cancelled and the car once again was retired.

"I always knew I wanted to do something else with it. I've always been a Chevy guy and in particular a Tri-Five fan," Accipiter said. The final



plan for this former NASCAR champion's ride came in a not-so intentional way – a theme, which runs through its history. Accipiter explains, "I had a friend who had this old '55 out at his shop. It was pretty much stripped as it was. The body actually was pretty rough," he said.

The body was so rough Accipiter, who runs a paint, body, and fabrication shop, ended up having to fabricate most of the body to fit the racing chassis. "Most of it is handmade. It has original

doors, but the front fenders had to be sectioned into about seven pieces in order for them to fit the rake of the frame. I had to all but make the rocker panels and rear quarter-panels, too. The doorframes, windshield, and the roof are about the only things I didn't have to mess with," Accipiter said. "I kinda like fabrication," he joked. You can tell he does.

Looking at the car it's easy to spot the quirky things done to the body, but also tell they were done with the



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utmost of care and precision. "I built the car to have fun with. I wanted something different and that's what I got. There was no master plan when I started, and it took years to finish. I'd play with it when I finished up customers work in the shop and eventually it became what it is today. I estimate it took me about seven years to build it," Accipiter recalled.

For a time, the build of this car ran parallel to another '55 project Accipiter has been working on. That car however, is still a few years from completion, but as both cars were being built, he discovered that working on two '55 projects could lead to confusion as to which part went on what car. Thus he began labeling parts for each in the following manner: "55 R" for the racing chassis and "55 T" for touring. The system worked so well he ended up adorning the doors of this car with the "55 R" decal, not that he could mistake this car for a '55 touring car.

While driving a former stock car on the street doesn't offer any of the creature comforts of a purpose-built touring car, Accipiter is fine with it. "It wasn't built to have an air-conditioner or radio, so why ruin it?" Accipiter said. He does admit it has power windows, but only because window cranks wouldn't fit in a usable location due to the placement of the chassis' rollcage and doorbars.



It is also licensed and insured to drive on the street, which he does with regularity, but Accipiter really gets his kicks road racing it at Carolina Motorsports Park's 2.27-mile road course. "This car was meant to race. It would be terrible not to do so. I love racing it. I can use it there and get the fun out of it. What's the use having a car if you can't enjoy it."

When racing the car, Accipiter removes the Tremec five-speed used for daily driving and bolts a race-ready Jerico four-speed in its place. The original Ford 9-inch is still under the car, which

houses a Detroit Locker with 3.89 gears. The suspension still holds true to its roots with a NASCAR road course setup under it, helping the 3,500-pound beast handle the corners. Accipiter will admit he isn't the king of the road course and doesn't intend to be. "It's about fun. This car is fun and I'm having fun driving it. For me that is what this is all about. I drive it to the track, I drive it to car shows, and I drive it just to drive it," Accipiter concluded. 🏁

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Chevrolet transmissions have evolved

quite a bit from the two-speed Powerglides of the 1960s to today's eight-speed marvels of engineering. And, in the same way hot rodders like to upgrade to modern engines, there's a lot to be said for upgrading to new-school transmissions as well. The most common, mechanically controlled transmissions found under classic Chevys are the three-speed Turbo Hydromatics. Typically, TH350s found their way behind small-blocks and TH400s backed up big-blocks. Back when you could fill your gas tank for \$10 they were great. But eventually, overdrives appeared and these simple, and effective, transmissions evolved.

Thanks to the overdrive gear, you didn't have to lose off-the-line performance, by swapping out rear gears, to get somewhat better gas mileage. By adding a fourth, overdrive, gear (typically with a ratio of 0.75:1), you can keep the snappy gearing and still drop the gas-guzzling rpm on the highway. For a long time, the 700-R4 was the top-dog for hot rodders wanting overdrive. But, as time marched on, it became increasingly easy to go with GM's newest innovation, the electronically controlled overdrive transmission.

Yep, in the same way computers changed how we run our engines, they also made transmissions better than ever. One of the first transmissions to gain swap popularity was the 4L60E. A direct descendent of the 700-R4, the 4L60E hit the streets in the mid-'90s. In case you're curious, the 4L60E gets its name from the four-speeds, longitudinally position, 6,000-pound GVW, and the fact that it's electronically controlled. It weighs in dry at 155 pounds, and is perfect behind the typical hot-rodded small-block.

For big-block cars you have two choices. You can have a 4L60E modified to accept more power or move up to Chevrolet's 4L80E line of transmissions, which began production in 1991. Unlike the 4L60E, which started out as the

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non-electronic 4L60, the 4L80E was designed from the start to be computer controlled. It's also heavily based on all the things that made the TH400 such a badass transmission in terms of strength. It's, in essence, a TH400 with overdrive, a lockup torque converter, and advanced electronic controls.

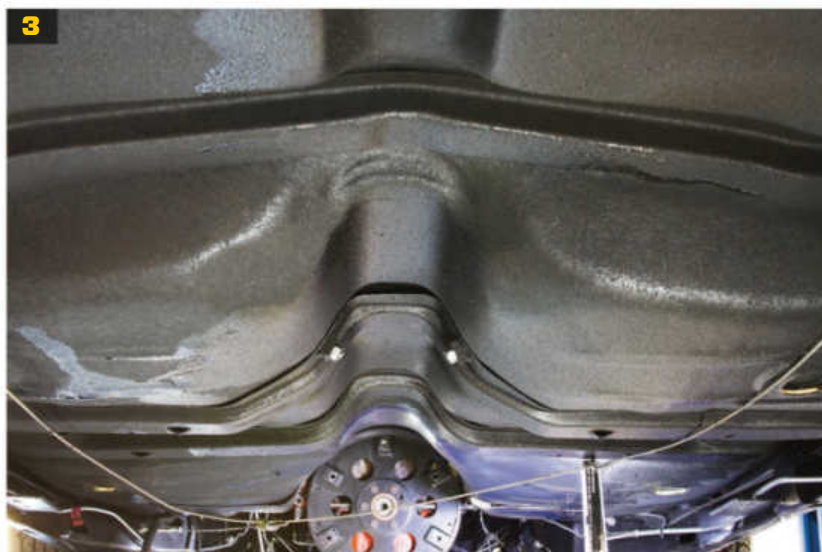
These units found their way into heavy-duty GM trucks and vans, but they're also perfect for a classic Chevy with a big-block. The fact that it's based on the TH400 transmission is a very good thing. After all, the TH400 was so popular, and strong, that they endured long after all the other old-school automatics were discontinued. Many parts were carried over into the 4L80E, including the 32-spline output shaft. In 2002, GM upped their game with the introduction of the 4L85E. It has the same basic dimensions as the 4L80E, but is upgraded with tidbits like a five-pinion reaction gearset and a five-pinion output gearset.

On paper, the 4L85E was rated up to 460 lb-ft (compared to 440 lb-ft for the 4L80E), but it can typically handle quite a bit more. Of course, all of the extra strength of the 4L80E comes with a weight penalty of over 100 pounds compared to the 4L60E, but if you have a big-block then you most likely don't care about a few extra pounds. They are the strongest GM overdrive transmissions ever produced. They can be upgraded for extreme power even though they lack any real problem areas

1 First up was removing the old TH400 transmission. A long extension made getting to the upper bellhousing bolts much easier. It's pretty heavy with the torque converter in place, so having a buddy and a transmission jack helps makes things much easier.

2 We then swapped the flexplate over to one compatible with our new Chevrolet Performance 4L85E transmission. In this case it was a 168-tooth, SFI-certified, TCI Auto piece we had left over from another project, but GM versions (PN 19260102) are readily available.

3 The trans tunnel on our 1967 Chevelle didn't seem very roomy, but, in fact, there's more room than there appears, especially as you near the engine.



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for most street engines. Even in stock form they are perfect for most hot-rodded Chevys.

What we were dealing with this time around was a 1967 Chevelle with a 396 big-block and a TH400 transmission. It was fun off the line, but miserable on the highway and painful at the gas station. At first we considered a 4L60E, but believe it or not, it's actually harder to fit one within the trans tunnel (due to solenoid placement) than a heavier 4L80E or 4L85E. Given that, we decided to go with the easier to fit and stronger 4L85E from Chevrolet Performance Parts. This will give us a transmission that will live a long time behind our big-block and give us all the benefits of 21st century transmission technology. 

4

Behold the great grandson of our previous TH400 transmission, the Chevrolet Performance 4L85E (PN 19300175). These transmissions are rated at 460 lb-ft (20 more than a 4L80E), but they can handle quite a bit more. In fact, Chevrolet Performance stuffed one behind a ZZ572 (720 hp and 685 lb-ft) and couldn't break it. The two black plugs are the input and output speed sensors and the grey plug is for the transmission control unit. The yellow-capped shaft is for the shifter. Gear ratios, from First through Reverse are: 2.48, 1.48, 1.00, 0.75, and 2.07.

5

And here's the 4L85E next to our TH400. As you can see, it looks a lot bigger, but most of the extra mass is in the length and the size of the pan, neither of which hampers fitting one under our Chevelle. In case you're curious, the 4L85E is 26.25 inches long. We have found this transmission to be an easier fit than the "smaller" 4L60E series of transmissions.

6

For the transmission cooler lines, the unit ships with OEM-style quick-connect fittings. For our transplant we needed -6AN so we hit up the guys over at Sweet Performance Products in Placentia, California, for some of their adapter fittings made especially for the 4L85E (PN M04GRWT44). As you can see, the rear fitting has a tube extension on it that is critical to the cooling circuit of the transmission. Fluid flow and pressures are critical in modern overdrive transmissions, so even something as seemingly trivial as this extension is important to retain. In short, don't just toss on any old fitting you happen to have around.

7

Running the -AN fittings can cause clearance issues with the trans tunnel. One logical solution might seem to be something like this. However, we've been warned by several transmission shops that this hard 90-degree turn can upset that critical fluid pressure/flow we mentioned earlier and cause trans problems down the road.

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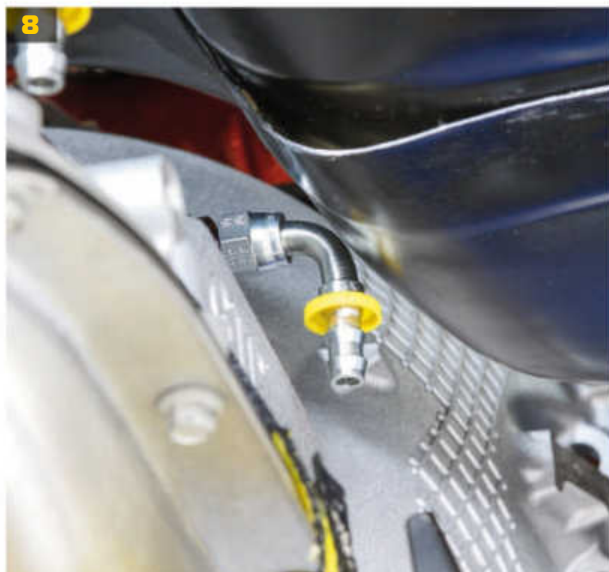
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8 With the fittings in place we raised the 4L85E trans into the tunnel and marked where we would have clearance issues. It turned out that the only spot was the front fitting since there was plenty of space around the rear one.

9 Instead of just wailing on the floor with a hammer, we used a piece of heaving tubing. This gave our dent a rounded, more factory, look. This was the only place in the tunnel where we needed to add a bit of clearance.

10 Behind a mild big-block we could have run a stock GM torque converter. But, the big-block in the Chevelle we were working on had a pretty lumpy cam. Given this we decided to hit up the guys at Hughes Performance for one of their Street Master 2,500-rpm, 13-inch torque converters (PN 25A-25LHD). The higher stall rpm eliminates sluggish, slow starts and will help the big-block idle smoother when in gear.

11 After pouring in some fluid, we slid the Hughes converter onto the 4L85E's input shaft.

12 We also decided to install the linkage for our 4L85E-compatible shifter now, rather than after it was installed under the Chevelle. We didn't want to ditch our column shift so we hit up Shiftworks for one of their connection kits (PN KK02). They even hooked us up with a sweet column lens indicator with the correct positions (P, R, N, OD, D, L2, L1) for our 4L85E.



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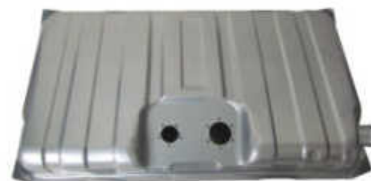


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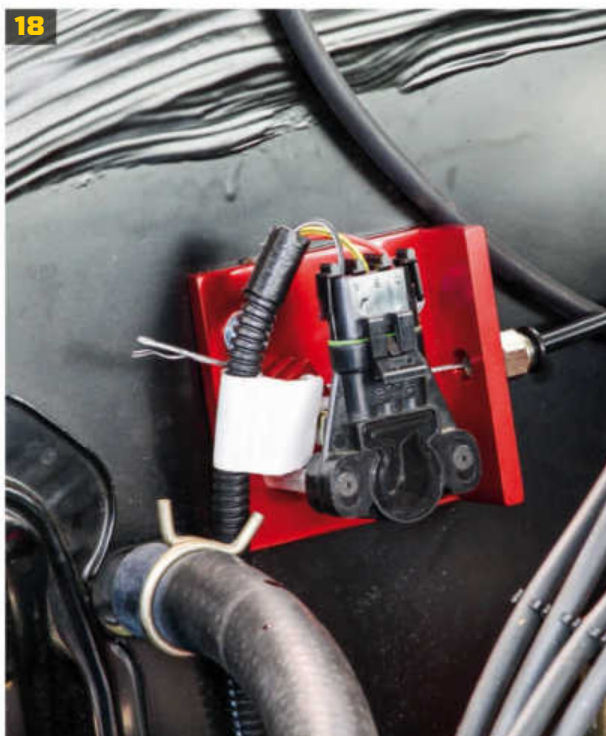
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13

It was then time to raise the 4L85E into its new home under the Chevelle. The trans weighed in at around 250 pounds dry and the converter added at least 60 pounds, so we were happy to have a sturdy tranny jack.

14

Remember that long extension we mentioned? Well, it's handy for installing the upper bellhousing bolts as well.

15

We most likely could have modified the existing crossmember, but we've had great luck with the ones sold by G Force. This boxed, black-powdercoated crossmember had integrated exhaust clearance cutouts, which we felt was a nice touch. For the trans mount we went with a polyurethane piece from Energy Suspension. We also installed the flexplate cover that came in our Chevrolet Performance Transmission Installation Kit (PN 19259119).

16

Our steel TH400 driveshaft was way too long, but having the stock driveshaft shortened isn't the best way to go. A lightweight aluminum driveshaft is much easier on modern overdrive transmissions, so we hit up Inland Empire Driveline for one of their 3.5-inch aluminum spin sticks.

17

We then dropped in some AmsOil ATF fluid. For a dipstick and tube you can pick one up from GM (PN 15198439 tube, 15183801 dipstick) or through an aftermarket company like TCI Auto (PN 743805).

18

Our big-block has a carb, so we needed a way to get throttle position information to the computer. Enter the TCI remote TPS sender (PN 377400). It can work with two different brackets; one for Quadrajet, Carter, and Edelbrock, and one for Holley 4150, 4160, and 4010 carbs. Setting this up per the instructions is critical if you want your transmission to live a long and happy life.

19

Our application required TCI part number 376705 for our Holley carb - hooking it all up was cake. We also picked up a TV Cable Bracket Corrector (PN 376715), which attached to the throttle bracket on the Holley carb and gave us a place to attach the TPS cable.



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20

The "E" in 4L85E stands for electronic and as such this transmission requires a computer to control it. For this we went with Chevrolet Performance Parts' Automatic Trans Controller Unit (TCU) kit (PN 19212657). The kit included the controller, labeled harness, software, and USB cable. It's weather resistant, but we chose to mount it under the passenger seat, since that seemed like the most out of sight location.

21

We're not going to bore you with wiring. Let's just say that all the connections on the harness were clearly labeled and the instructions made it a nearly plug-and-play endeavor.

22

Under the Chevelle we simply plugged in the labeled connectors, such as input speed, output speed, and the main transmission harness. Once this was done we hooked up a laptop and worked through the setup menus per the instructions.



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Early A-bodies, like our Project AMD 1967 Chevelle, came from the factory with triangulated four-link rear suspensions. In a time of leaf springs this was a big step up, but the four-link design presented its own set of challenges. First of all, to keep costs down, GM used stamped steel control arms that flexed under load. Now, some flex was needed to avoid binding up the suspension when cornering, but under hard load this flex could cause some pretty sketchy handling characteristics and driveline-killing wheelhop. To fix the wheelhop, heavy-duty arms could be added along with hard bushings, but that caused the suspension to bind in torsion and pretty much ruined how the car handled through turns. Heim ends fixed wheelhop and let the arms articulate but they transmitted a ton of noise to the body. But, no matter which way you went the biggest problem was the arms didn't provide a way to adjust pinion angle.

Pinion angle is simply the angle of the differential's pinion in relation to the car's driveshaft. On a stock car, running stock stuff, having the ability to adjust this angle isn't that important since the factory dialed it

in. But, if you've done drivetrain modifications, or lowered the car a lot, being able to adjust your pinion angle is pretty important. We asked the guys over at Currie and they explained that a typical universal joint is designed to handle between 1 and 3 degrees of pinion angle. If a U-joint is pushed beyond this range it can hyperextend and fail, which will most likely ruin your day. Given this, they strive for 2 degrees of pinion angle on a street car. Sometimes people increase the pinion angle to get more bite at the dragstrip, but Currie doesn't think this is a good idea on a street car. So, if you want more bite at the strip

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then it's better to adjust it for the track at the track and for the street on the street.

But why have any pinion angle at all? One would think that the best angle would be zero so that the power could transmit straight into the differential from the driveshaft. In theory that's true, but keep in mind when you launch hard, the differential will try to rotate upwards and that will change your pinion angle. So while it might be 2 degrees at rest, it could be zero under load from a hard hit of the throttle. The idea is to compensate for this differential

rotation without letting the pinion angle go negative (beyond zero or hyperextending).

On our Project AMD 1967 Chevelle we installed a 4L80E transmission behind our big-block. This required us to lower the transmission crossmember just a touch, but it was enough to change our pinion angle. Since we had the stock arms we were pretty much stuck with what it was. The Chevelle also had some wheelhop at the strip so we decided to fix both issues with a set of rear control arms from Currie Enterprises. 



1
Our 1967 AMD Chevelle was equipped with just the basic stamped steel control arms. Sometimes, typically on SS models, these arms will be beefed up with steep plates, and while they are much better, they can still flex and are not adjustable.

2
The idea was to do one side at a time to keep the rearend positioned correctly. We disconnected the shock, raised the body, removed the rear spring, and supported the differential with a trans jack (or a couple of pole jacks). With that done, we unbolted the lower control arm.

3
Here you can see the billet 6061-T6 aluminum Currie Currectrac arm (PN CE-7011LA) next to the stocker. It should be obvious which is stronger, but the Currectrac arm has other advantages as well.

4
The biggest upgrade is the urethane bushed Johnny Joint rod end that provides a range of motion (30 degrees of travel, which is more than a Heim-style end) without any non-linear binding. It's greasable, rebuildable, and light years better than the stock rubber end.



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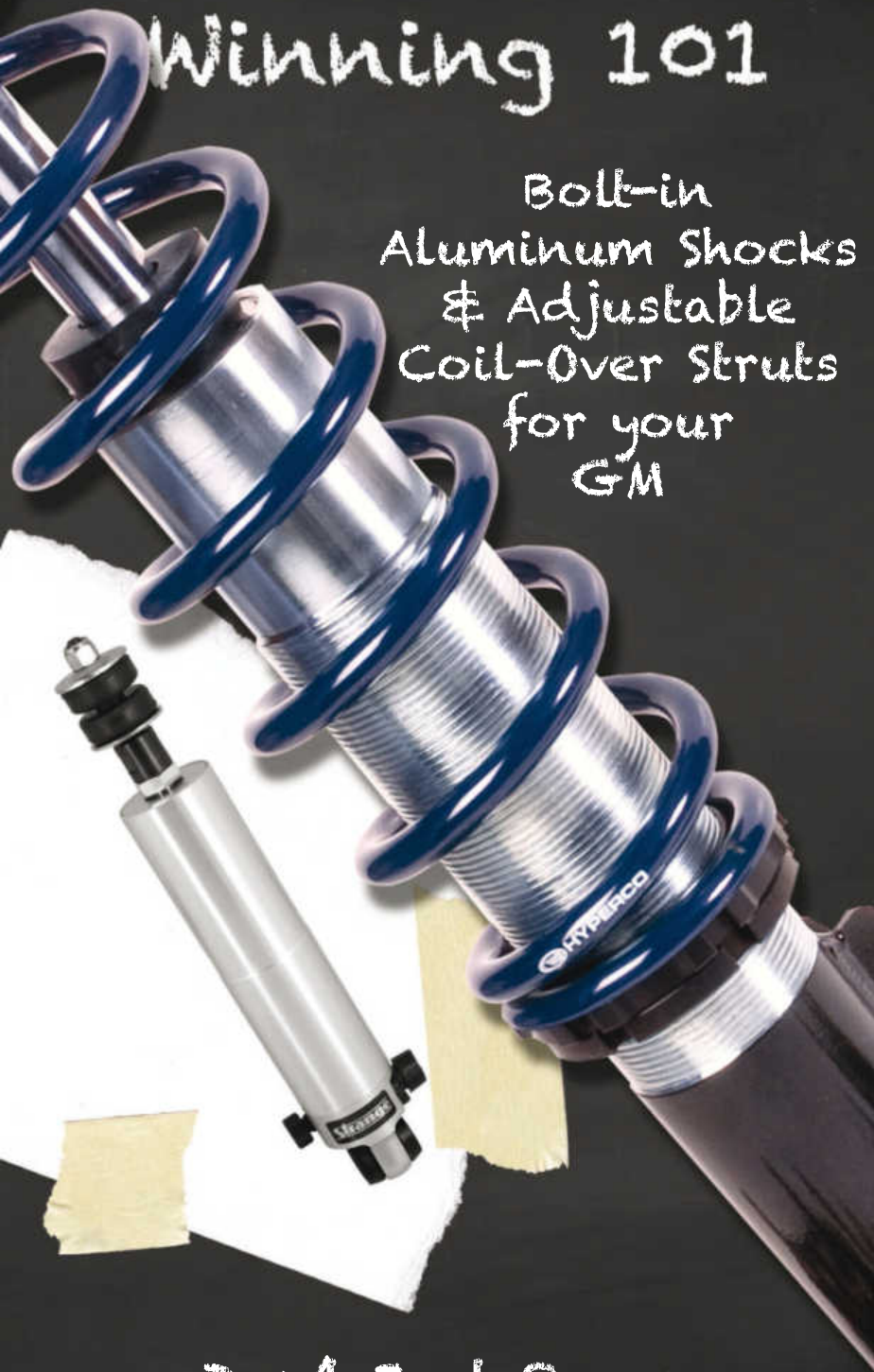
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5



6



7



8



9





5

On the other end is a greasable urethane bushing. This dramatically reduces the amount of noise transmitted into the body of the car. The arms also have mounting provisions for stock or aftermarket sway bars. Plus they look killer, which is always a bonus.

6

The triangulated upper arm was a bit harder to get to, but it was simply held in place with two fasteners.

7

Currie's replacement upper control arm (PN CE-7011C) is a "turnbuckle" style design. This means the center section can be rotated to adjust the arm length (and therefore set pinion angle) without removing either end from the car. On the differential end, the steel fork-bracket mounts to the bushing on the differential just like the stocker. On the other end there's a rebuildable Johnny Joint end, just like on the lower arm.

8

To get in the ballpark, we adjusted the Currie arm to the same length as the stock one from the car. Once everything is together we can adjust the Chevelle's pinion angle.

9

With all the bits in the way, such as the exhaust, the upper arm is hard to photograph, but it bolted in just like the stocker. On some 12-bolts it may be necessary to grind off a bit of the steel fork-bracket on the differential end if there's interference to the gear case.

10

We then repeated the procedures on the passenger side of the Chevelle.



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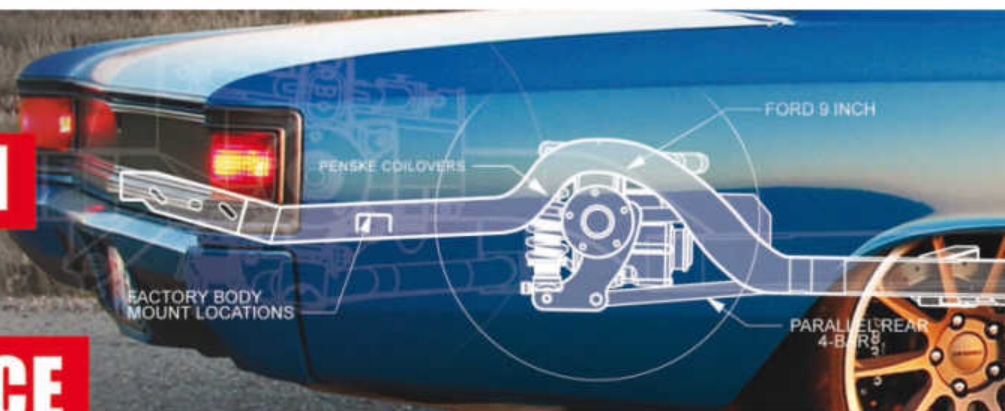
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SETTING PINION ANGLE

Currie takes the process one step further by factoring in the transmission output shaft's angle in determining where the pinion angle should be set. Sometimes corrections need to be made at the front of the vehicle to ensure that the engine and transmission are sitting in the proper location. According to Currie, the average car builder should try for 1 to 3 degrees between the tailshaft of the transmission and driveshaft, and 1 to 3 degrees between the driveshaft and pinion. Furthermore, the two angles should be nearly equal (between 1 and 3 degrees), but always opposite. The turnbuckle design of the upper arms will make it easy for us to add a bit more pinion angle at the strip. A digital level or magnetic protractor makes getting the angle a snap.



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11
A large Phillips screwdriver, or tapered guide pin, is helpful in getting the rear control arm lined up with the bracket on the axletube.

12
With all the arms installed we went back and torqued down all the bolts and hit the bushings and Johnny Joints with some grease.

SOURCES:

Currie Enterprises
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currieenterprises.com

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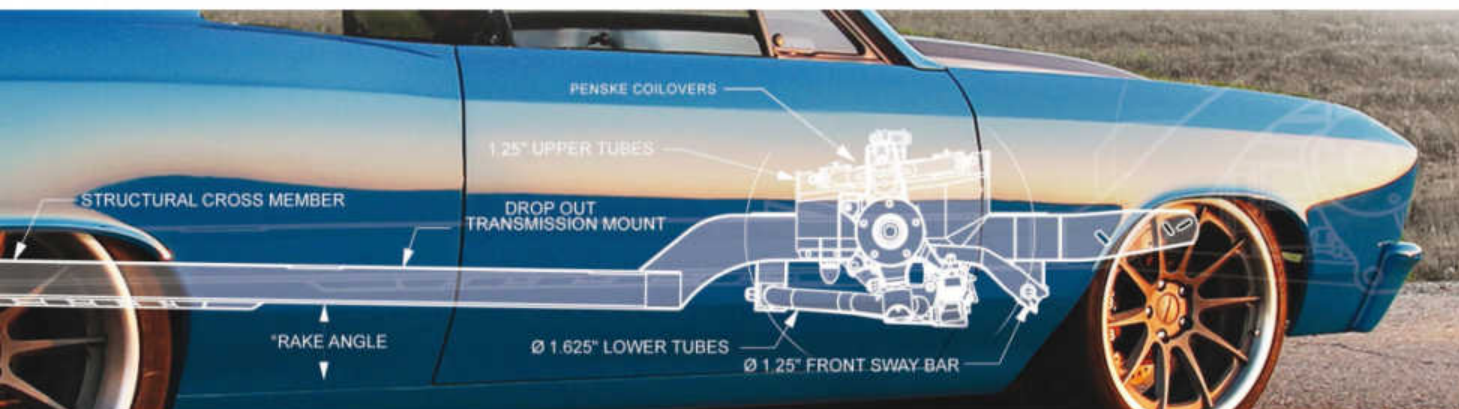


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There is something about a big-block that is just plain cool. Combine that X-factor with massive cubic inches, ramped-up compression, and injected alcohol and you have a combination that is set on kill. When we last left off, Project Old School, Bad, our 572ci big-block Chevy, had made the jump from a pile of parts to an assembled engine ready to go to battle on the engine dyno at Westech Performance. The goal was to follow a build outside of the normal street/strip mill, and prove that big horsepower can still easily be attained without the use of nitrous or boost – just like drag racers of the golden years routinely built.

The 572 is destined for use in an '80s Top Alcohol Funny Car chassis, and with its expected power output, should easily push the 1,400-pound car to 7.20 elapsed times in the quarter-mile without breaking a sweat.

Unlike most of the dyno testing we do here at SUPER CHEVY (as with the vast majority of other enthusiast brands)



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this engine lacks a traditional carbureted or electronically fuel injected induction system. In its place is a time-tested and track-proven Enderle mechanical injection system.

It's important to differentiate between mechanical and electronic injection systems. In an electronic system, a computer uses electrical pulses to power injectors on and off, feeding fuel to the cylinders based on either a pre-programmed map or feedback from various sensors such as those monitoring air temperature, exhaust oxygen content, coolant temperature, etc.

In a mechanically injected system, there is no electronic involvement whatsoever. The entire fuel system operates off of fuel pressure and various orifice sizes. The upsides to a system like this are simplicity, adjustability, and consistency. The trade-off is that the throttle is essentially an on/off switch with very little fuel metering ability between idle and wide open throttle – perfect for the racetrack, not so much for the street.


The core components of the Enderle system on Old School, Bad are the mechanical fuel pump (which is driven off of the crankshaft), the barrel valve, and the eight injectors (also known as nozzles).

Fuel pressure from the mechanical pump arrives at the barrel valve where it either gets sent into the engine through the injectors or back to the tank via the fuel pressure relief

spring or the main pill. The barrel valve has a small, tapered groove cut into the center that allows fuel to pass by for idle metering and for some progressivity in the fuel curve during its rotation. But, that progressivity is minimal and the system is primarily designed to operate at full throttle.

Mechanical injection systems don't use jets like a carb would. Instead, they use a pill in the return line. Because the pill regulates how much fuel gets sent back to the tank, inserting a smaller orifice size will actually richen the fuel curve by sending more fuel to the nozzles and less back to the tank. This is completely unlike a carburetor that requires a larger orifice size to increase fuel flow into the engine.

After arriving at Westech with the engine, we strapped it to the dyno and got to work in our quest for power. Watching this old-school build in action was a refreshing step off SUPER CHEVY's normal beaten path and it was surprising just how fast Westech's Steve Brule and the engine's builder Ken Gilispie had the engine dialed in. Seriously, who could pass up an opportunity to learn the art of tuning mechanical injection?

We ran the engine through its paces, tweaking timing and fuel ratios until peak power (see graph) was achieved. And, while we had the engine on the dyno, we thought it would be interesting to run it back-to-back with race gas and compare the power curves. Read on to find out how our big-cube brawler did at its first matchup. 



1

The small, black housing contains the barrel valve. The front brass fitting contains the relief valve that controls how much pressure the entire system operates at and the second brass fitting contains the main pill that meters fuel flow between the nozzles and the fuel tank.

2

A set of large tube headers expel spent exhaust gasses while MSD ignition wires light the fire.

3

Starting a high-compression alcohol engine cold can be a bit of a challenge. To make the process easier, Gilispie squirts some 87 octane down the butterflies. The gasoline is easier to ignite and helps the engine kick to life.

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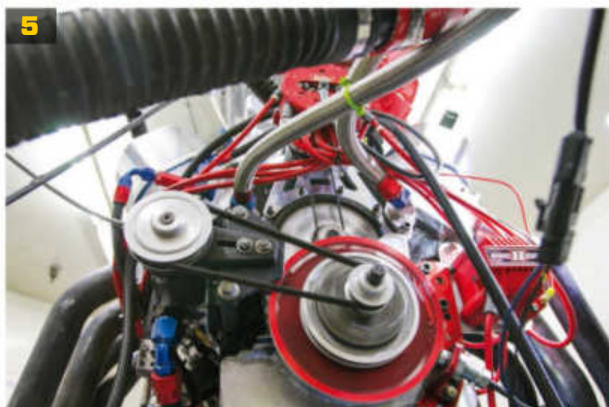
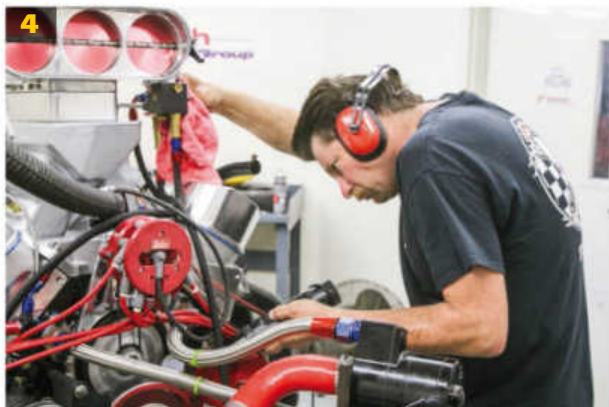
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4 Once the engine fired, Gilispie immediately got to work setting the timing on the front-mount Mallory distributor. A front-mount unit runs off of a belt and is isolated from vibrations and twist in the solid roller lifter camshaft. This makes for a much more accurate timing signal.

5 Here's a shot of the beast in action. Note the belts driving the mechanical fuel pump (left) and distributor (above).

6 See anything wrong with this picture? Because of the sky-high 16.2:1 compression, the pistons' domes come very, very close to the spark plugs. This necessitated clocking, or indexing, the spark plugs to avoid contact with the pistons – something we accidentally forgot to do after taking a spark plug reading.

7 The valvesprings in this engine produce just over 1,000 pounds of pressure at peak lift (0.900-inches). Luckily, the T&D shaft-rocker system is up to the challenge of reigning in that massive energy.

8 Unlike a carb, a smaller pill (jet) in a mechanical injection system actually richens the mixture. This is so because the smaller pill allows less fuel to return to the tank, sending more of it into the engine. Also, changing the fuel tune-up is a quick process since changing the one pill alters the entire curve.

9 Here is Gilispie's arsenal of spare main pills. At the track these account for various changes in temperature, humidity, and altitude.

10 Here is the throttle linkage that connects the throttle plates to the barrel valve. Gilispie can alter it at the racetrack to slow the car down or speed it up depending on track conditions.



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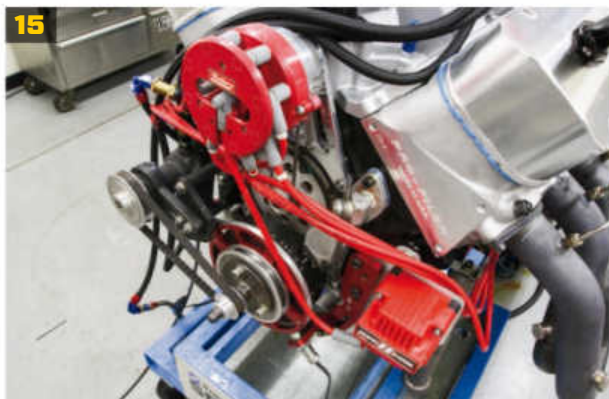
Westech's Steve Brule does his all-to-familiar lash dance, rolling the engine over and making sure each valve is within spec.

12

A cranking compression test revealed the engine to produce 224 psi. While that may sound low for an engine with 16.2:1 compression, keep in mind the radical camshaft timing, which allows a considerable amount of compression to bleed out of the late-closing intake valve.



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13

Gillisie made one nozzle change during the dyno session. The swap was not part of the tuning process, but a necessary means in order to make a few pulls on race gas instead of alcohol. (see graph)

14

The author has a bad habit of leaving Westech's floors dirtier than he found them. In this case, the oil filter adapter, a factory unit that had its relief valve plugged, cracked in half; dramatically (and quite liberally) coating the dyno cell floor with oil. The solution, and the recommendation for readers, is to switch to a higher strength billet oil filter adapter for any performance applications.

15

The Profiler cylinder heads used for the test flow a whopping 477 cfm at 0.900 inches of lift. They feature a standard 24-degree valve angle, which makes them compatible with the majority of stock-style valvetrain components. According to Steve Brule, 1,000 horsepower is right about the limit of a head of this design. Past that point, cylinder heads with modified valve angles and specialized port designs are needed.

16

At the end of a day of tuning (and 20-plus pulls on the engine dyno) our 572ci big-block cranked out a solid 964 genuine and naturally aspirated horsepower. While we would have loved to see it crest the 1,000 mark, this is a downright respectable number for an engine with nothing more than high-end, conventional parts and big displacement.



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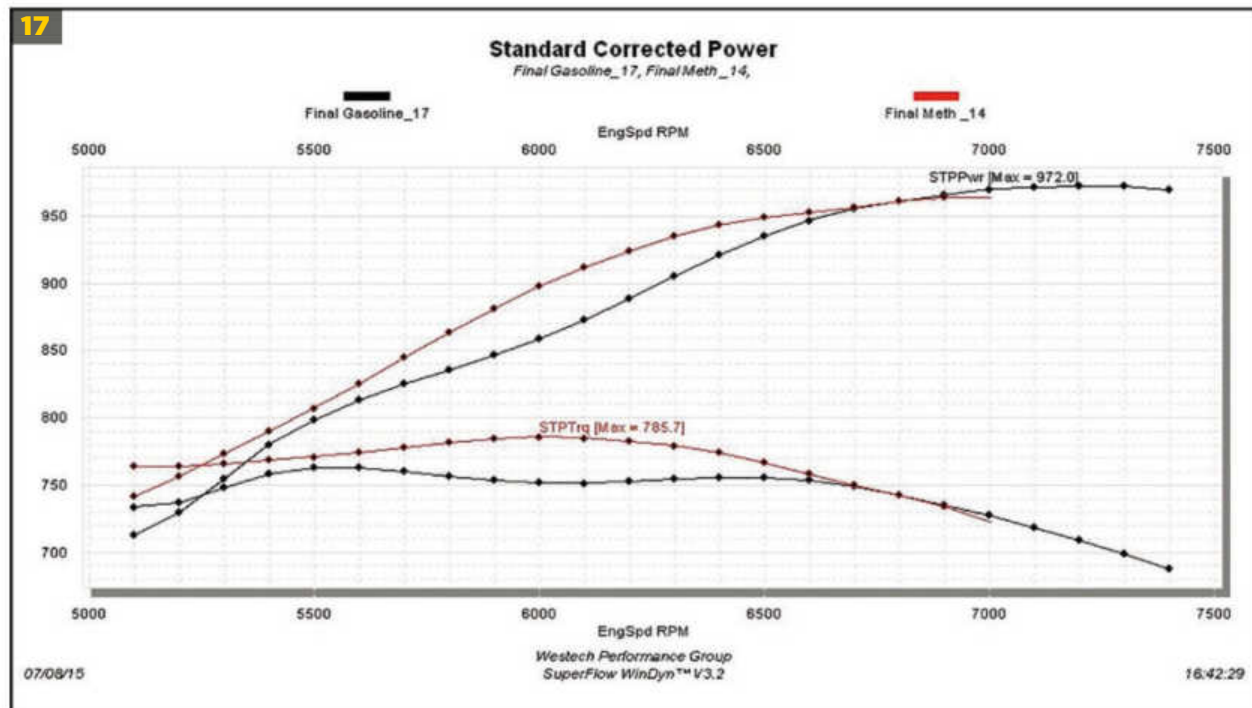


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We took Matt Jones' Multilink IRS-equipped Camaro to Super Chevy's Suspension Showdown and here's what test driver Mary Pozzi said: "This is THE BEST suspension I've ever felt underneath a car on a track." That says it all.



17



17

Once we had finished tuning the engine for methanol and were satisfied with its 964-horsepower output, we thought it would be interesting to run a back-to-back comparison with race gas. What we found was very interesting.

On alcohol, the engine made substantially more torque than race gasoline – a known and expected benefit of methanol. The alcohol curve was short and steep, with peak power ringing in at 6,900 rpm.

On race gas, things got interesting and the personality of the engine changed. Torque fell off substantially (expected), but peak power actually improved to 972 (unexpected). What was really surprising was how the engine carried power to a peak of 7,200 rpm and didn't begin to drop off until almost 7,400. The theory here is that because methanol has a different stoichiometric ratio than gasoline, and it takes a higher volume of fuel to produce the same power, that higher volume of fuel could have been limiting airflow into the runners causing the engine to run out of breath a few hundred rpm sooner than the race gas. While this is just a theory, it would explain the difference in power peaks and why the race gas carried rpm slightly farther.

THE GUTS OF OLD SCHOOL, BAD

BLOCK: World Products Merlin III iron

BORE: 4.500 inch

CRANKSHAFT: 4.500-inch stroke Crower Enduro

CONNECTING RODS: Crower Maxi-Light billet steel

BEARINGS: Clevite

PISTONS: Ross Racing Pistons custom 2618-aluminum forgings [16.2:1 compression], Total Seal gapless piston rings

CYLINDER HEADS: Profiler 375cc Sniper X CNC

VALVETRAIN: T&D shaft-mount rockers, Erson lifters, Manton pushrods, Jesel beltdrive

CAMSHAFT: Bullet Cams solid roller 0.900/0.850 lift, 285/300 duration [intake/exhaust], 115 LSA

FASTENERS: ARP

INDUCTION: Enderle mechanical fuel injection with Bird Catcher hat

IGNITION: Mallory distributor, MSD coil and ignition box

MACHINE WORK: Dougan's Engine and Machine

SOURCES:

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crower.com

Dart Machinery

248-362-1188

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SHOWTIME

THE ROADSTER SHOP FINDS A WAY TO
MAKE A 2014 CAMARO ZL1 **EVEN BETTER**



by **Steven Rupp** and **Robert McGaffin**

It's always fascinating how some cars come about. The Roadster Shop is known for churning out some of the baddest and hottest performing customs in the country. But

typically, the cars they transform fall into the "classic" category. A couple of years ago they were invited to partake in a GM SEMA car program. A rendering was submitted of a fifth-gen and ultimately GM chose them to "work over" a brand-new ZL1 Camaro. As Road-

ster Shop's Phil Gerber told us, "We wanted to take a car that was regularly customized today and give it a new twist that we hadn't seen before. There are a lot of bolt-on parts available for fifth-gens, but they only go so far. We saw other areas for enhancement and





had different ideas when it came to commonly customized areas like the rear spoiler and rockers." But they wanted the car to perform as well as it looked so they hit up some of the best parts companies in the country.

Roadster Shop rolled with the modern vibe of the 2014 ZL1 by extensively using matte carbon fiber in the build. This included the front splitter, carbon roof panel, and carbon trunk lid. There were other items they wanted to address, not available through the aftermarket, so Roadster Shop made their own. Custom touches like carbon-fiber quarter inserts, fabricated aluminum side rocker trim, aluminum rear low-profile air gap spoiler, one-off billet ZL1 emblems, and custom graphics were just a few of their subtle, yet striking, changes.



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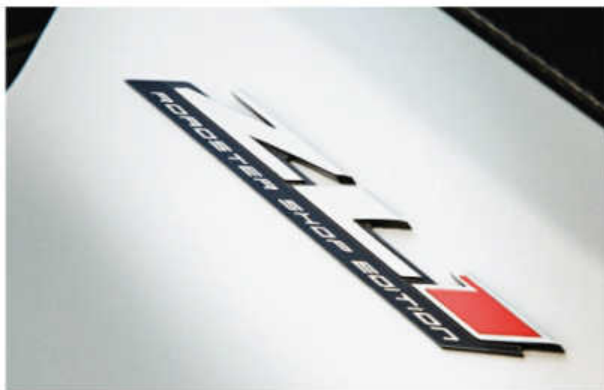
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For suspension, the already capable ZL1 chassis was supplemented with double-adjustable Penske coilovers, which help drop the stance 1.5 inches, teamed with Hyperco springs. The brakes were swapped over to a Brembo Gran Turismo kit with Type 3 rotors and monoblock six- and four-piston calipers. Rolling around these upgraded binders are a set of monoblock, matte-bronze Forgeline GA1R



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20-inch front and 21-inch rear wheels wrapped in Pirelli P Zero Rosso 275/25 and 295/35 rubber.

The engine may look fairly stock, but it was worked over as well with a Lingenfelter 630hp performance package, which included a 2.55-inch blower pulley (taking boost to 12 psi), ECM reprogram, and a high-flow air intake to feed the beast plenty of atmosphere.

The Camaro took two months to transform and debuted at the 2014 SEMA Show in Vegas where it garnered quite a bit of attention. Since then they've run it at several of the Optima Ultimate Street Car track events as well numerous autocross races. It's nice to know that what started out as a show car is tearing up the asphalt the way GM intended. 🏁



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REMOVE THE STOCK LS7 INTAKE.
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PICK UP 30 REAR-WHEEL HP!



When BS flags go up, only to come right back down once the skeptics are silenced, chances are something extraordinary just happened. What's more, when the people calling BS in the first place are highly respected experts in their field it makes the feat even more astounding. That's exactly what MSD has accomplished with its new Atomic AirForce intake manifold for LS and LT1 small-blocks. Ever since the company unveiled its new intake at the 2014 SEMA Show, engine builders, performance shops, and consumers alike have all been dubious of its claimed 30-plus horsepower increase over a stock intake manifold. Seriously, how can a simple bolt-on that any monkey can install in a little over an hour net so much power? Outside of a bigger cam, ported heads, or a power-adder, numbers like that just aren't possible. Or are they?

On a mission to find out whether or not these claims are legit, we headed over to Late Model Racecraft in Houston to test out MSD's new intake manifold on a 2008 Corvette Z06. Since a heavily modified combination would over-inflate horsepower gains, our test subject is highly representative of a typical street-driven Z06. Equipped with LMR's Slayer package, modifications include a mild hydraulic roller cam, American Racing 1.875-inch long-tube headers,

a cold-air induction system, an ATI underdrive pulley, custom PCM tuning, and an aftermarket intake manifold. Although LMR has had great success with the existing intake manifolds on the market it was eager to test out the new MSD hardware. "I've seen people claim that the MSD intake is worth 30-40 horsepower over stock, and I just didn't believe it. We had to test it out to see for ourselves," says LMR's Steven Fereday.

After establishing three baseline pulls that averaged 530 rear-wheel horsepower, the LMR crew got to work. Just one hour later, the manifold swap was complete. To the amazement of everyone in the shop, the Z06 laid down a three-pull average of 560 horsepower. Factoring in a 15 percent driveline loss, that equates to an overall gain of 35 horsepower at the

crank. Keep in mind that the quoted 30 rear-wheel horsepower gain represents an average over three before and after dyno pulls. The horsepower difference between the lowest baseline pull and the highest pull after the manifold swap was right around 40.

Since LMR prefers collecting accurate and repeatable data instead of bench racing the biggest hp numbers on the Internet, it's sticking with the 30 rear-wheel horsepower figure. "That's just crazy. Picking up 30 horsepower from a simple intake manifold swap is incredible," Fereday opines. Coming from a shop that builds 3,000-plus horsepower race cars, and has tested just about every LSX aftermarket part known to man, that's quite an endorsement. 📺



The MSD Atomic AirForce intake is available for LS1, LS2, LS3, LS6, LS7, L99, and LT1 applications. It's compatible with both stock and aftermarket fuel rails.



Unlike a single-plane intake, MSD's unique design maintains equal runner lengths for all eight cylinders. The upper section is easily removable to provide convenient access if additional porting is necessary. The unique bell-mouthed runner entrances minimize shrouding and maximize airflow.



For the power-adder crowd, the MSD manifold's durable polymer construction can handle up to 30 psi of boost, and tapping it for fogger nozzles is easy thanks to thick nitrous bosses. The massive 103mm throttle opening allows bolting up larger throttle bodies without the need for porting.



Before getting to work on the install, the 2008 Z06 laid down a three-pull dyno baseline of 530 horsepower on LMR's Dynojet. That's pretty darn stout considering the car's minimal mods, but with 427 hungry cubic inches to feed, the stock intake was definitely choking things up.

HOW CAN A SIMPLE BOLT-ON ...
NET SO MUCH POWER? OUTSIDE
OF A BIGGER CAM, PORTED HEADS,
OR A POWER-ADDER, **NUMBERS**
LIKE THAT JUST AREN'T POSSIBLE.
OR ARE THEY?



5 Removing the factory intake manifold is a very straightforward affair. After removing the rubber intake bellow off the throttle body, LMR technicians disconnected the fuel line, MAP sensor, PCV hoses, MAF sensor, and fuel injector and throttle body connectors.



8 Prior to dropping the new intake manifold onto the engine, LMR technicians swapped over the throttle body, MAP sensor, and brake booster hose. Granted that this particular combo may benefit from a larger 102mm throttle body, sticking with the stock 90mm unit definitely provides a more precise representation of the true horsepower advantages of the MSD intake over the factory LS7 manifold.



6 Next on the agenda is loosening up the intake manifold bolts and pulling the booster hose out of the brake booster before the manifold, fuel rails, and throttle body can be removed as a single assembly. The entire intake assembly must slide forward slightly in order to pull out the two rear bolts.



9 The intake manifold bolts should be tightened in two passes to 89 in-lb. Starting with the center bolts and moving outward ensures that the intake manifold seats properly onto the heads.

7

Although the MSD intake manifold measures slightly taller than the stock LS7 unit, the big increase in plenum volume comes from the overall differences in shape. Whereas the stock manifold slopes downward sharply from the center of the runners toward the intake ports, the MSD intake boasts taller, squared-off shoulders.



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10



With the new intake manifold bolted down, wrapping up the install is simply a matter of reconnecting all the hoses and electrical connectors. Once firing up the engine, it's important to check for fuel and vacuum leaks before heading down the road.

11



Traditionally, striking a balance between low- and high-rpm performance involved plopping a large plenum on top of long intake runners. Since single-plane intakes and tunnel-rams won't fit under the hood of a late-model, the MSD AirForce intake offers the best of both worlds in a compact package that fits neatly beneath the cowl.

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FLYING HIGH

Just about every aspect of engine design — whether it's establishing intake port cross-section, cam-shaft duration, or header primary diameter — is a tradeoff between low-end torque and high-rpm power. The same applies to intake manifolds. Generally, long and skinny intake runners boost air speed and low-rpm performance while sacrificing high-rpm breathing. Conversely, short and fat runners improve high-rpm airflow and horsepower at the expense of low-end torque. Compounding this complex balancing act is plenum volume. Smaller plenums tend to increase low-rpm performance, while larger plenums extend high-rpm power. What's truly impressive about the MSD intake is how it increased engine output at every single rpm point from 3,000 to 7,000 rpm on our test vehicle, there was no tradeoff.

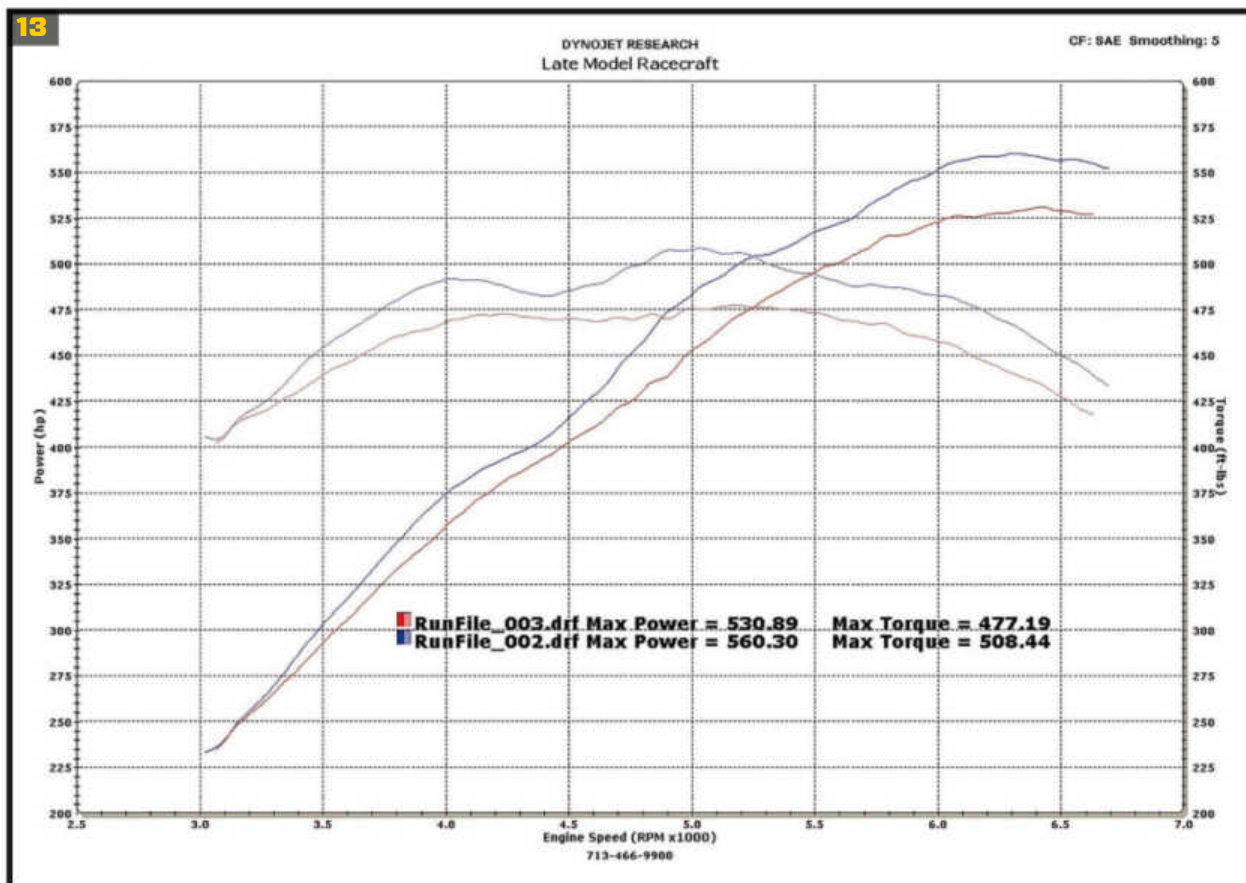
A closer examination of the AirForce intake manifold provides some insight as to how MSD pulled this off. Compared to a stock manifold, the MSD unit features a substantial increase in plenum volume. While this typically hints at a manifold that prioritizes high-rpm performance, popping off the removable lid reveals extremely long intake runners that boost low-end torque. By extending the driver-side bank of intake runners to the passenger-side bank, and vice-versa, the MSD intake is essentially a cross-ram manifold encased in a large plenum. In essence, MSD has devised a very clever way to package both long runners and big plenum under the sharply sloping hoods of late-model performance machines.

12



During the post-install dyno pulls, the MSD intake moved enough additional air that it required fattening up the air/fuel mixture. Picking up 30 rear-wheel horsepower has never been so easy.

13



From 3,000 to 7,000 rpm, the across-the-board horsepower and torque gains provided by the MSD AirForce intake manifold are simply astounding. Although LMR remains hush-hush on its cam specs, the fact that the Z06's power curve peaks at the same 6,300 rpm as a stock LS7 indicates the cam isn't that much bigger than the stock unit.

SOURCES:

Late Model Racecraft
713-466-9900
latemodelracecraft.com

MSD
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TRACK THRASH




CHEVYS RUN HARD IN THE FALKEN TIRE 2015 SUPER CHEVY SUSPENSION & HANDLING CHALLENGE AT WILLOW SPRINGS RACEWAY

by Steven Rupp, the Author, Nick Licata, Evan Perkins, John Gilbert, and Robert McGaffin

Back in 2008 we came up with an idea; let's invite various suspension companies to come out to sunny California and run their cars through a gauntlet of handling tests. It turned out to be a hit and since then we've been flinging Chevys around our test venues with reckless (as in we haven't had any wrecks) abandon. For 2015, the Super Chevy Suspension & Handling Challenge is proud to welcome a title sponsor, Falken Tire. After all, tires are critical to handling and this way we could make sure all the cars in the competition were on the same 200-treadwear Azenis RT615K rollers.

As in years past, our testing took place at Willow Springs Raceway in Rosamond, California, and entailed three segments: slalom, skidpad, and road course. These three events are vastly different and let us analyze each car's automotive personality. The catch is, the cars aren't competing against each other, but instead against a 2015 Chevrolet Camaro SS with the 1LE track pack option. Why? Because comparing cars that vary so wildly in terms of cost, complexity, and weight wouldn't really make sense. For example, a 1969 Camaro with an LS7 and full chas-

sis should be faster around a track than 1967 Chevelle with a small-block and bolt-on parts. By comparing the various entries to a modern performance car we get a benchmark that people can relate to. After all, when you're buying suspension parts, you want to know that they will give your classic modern handling prowess, right?

This year, eight companies brought cars from all over the country to run hard in the desert heat. And, for the first time ever, the field was devoid of Camaros (besides our baseline 2015 1LE). Yep, this year seemed to be all about Novas with cars fielded by Church Boys, Classic Performance Products (CPP), Speedway Motors, Speed Tech, and Total Cost Involved (TCI). The balance of the field included one Chevelle from Global West, the Falken Tire-backed C2 Corvette of Brian Hobaugh, and a 1984 Monte Carlo from Schwartz Performance. 



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The first order of business was to run each car through technical inspection. Since this wasn't anyone's first rodeo the cars came ready to rock, but we still made sure the lug nuts were tight, the batteries secure, and all the junk was out of the trunk.



The coolest pit vehicle we've ever seen was Speedway's Chevy-powered roadster. It carried tools, fire equipment, air, and a good supply of fuel. And it did it in style.



CPP did a mad scramble and finished this 1967 Nova SS just in time for the event.

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TRACK THRASH

Yeah, it was a driving event, but everything also had to be shined up pretty since each car will be featured over the next few months. In those features we will spill the beans on how the car did and how they stacked up against our 2015 Camaro 1LE.



One new bit of information we started gathering last year was vehicle weights. After all, a ride that comes in at 3,100 pounds has a distinct advantage over one that tips the scales at 3,800. The weight ranges of the cars ran from just over 3,000 pounds to a scale-crushing 3,866 pounds, turned in by our baseline Camaro.



Our SUPER CHEVY video crew was frantically busy mounting GoPro cameras and piloting drones. This means we'll have some kick-ass video of all the action on www.superchevy.com.



One constant in all our years of testing is Mary Pozzi. We lost track of how many national autocrossing championships she's won and she's very adept and hopping from car to car and quickly getting a feel for each vehicle. This year participants could use Mary for their timed road course laps or bring a driver of their choosing. But Mary still drove each car and will provide her impressions in each upcoming car feature.

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The nastiest sounding car at the event was Speedway Motors' 1965 Nova and its 12:1-compression 406-inch small-block. The Nova came loaded for bear with Robby Unser behind the wheel. Speaking of wheels, it often lifted the inside front one when in turns.



Another customer car was this 1968 Nova brought out by Speed Tech Performance. It looked great; in fact, it was so pretty we were a bit sad to flog it so hard, but we did anyways.

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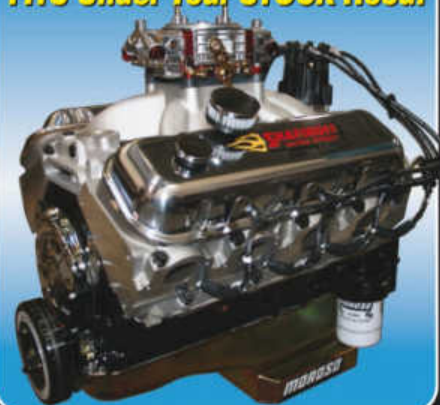
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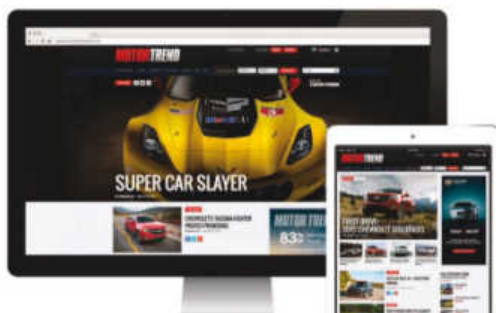


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2015 CAMARO 1LE

Having a baseline car is a way for all of this to make sense. After all, if we tell you that car X ran Willow Springs in 1 minute 12 seconds what does that tell you? The answer is not much since you have nothing to compare it to. But if you know one of the Chevys we tested was a second faster or slower than a new Camaro 1LE then it gives you a frame of reference. The 1LE was the heaviest car at our event (3,866 pounds), but it also had goodies like ABS and a computer to manage the suspension. We had Mary Pozzi flog it around the track and here's what she had to say.

"Steve Rupp handed me the keys and with a sly grin, said 'Drive it!' So I did. We first discussed which nanny mode would be optimal for my trip around the Streets of Willow and decided Competition was best. Minimal interaction from the computer with a pinch of StabiliTrak thrown in for good measure was fun and provided excellent 'feel' of the track no matter what position the big red car ended up in. I elected not to play with the launch control as it really wasn't needed for my driving evaluation. I did, however, recognize that Traction Control and StabiliTrak were still in the background, and that the steering felt a bit heavier (a plus for me) for better and more precise corner entry. The icing on this cake were the Recaro seats, and these buckets held me in place no matter how hard I got flung around.

I found the Camaro 1LE very neutral, and with all the suspension and chassis strengthening bits pulled from the ZL1 it should be. The six-speed manual was geared perfectly for the 3.91:1 axle ratio and had plenty of pull from the 6.2-liter LS3 with "only" 426 hp. Remember when that was a pretty decent number? Well, it still is for this car, as every bit of it was able to reach the ground as the Camaro gobbled up the corners and then spit them out along with the exhaust. It still drove somewhat "big" and there was a hint of understeer on corner entry (much preferred to the alternative) but it didn't seem ponderous or heavy." We would like to give a huge thanks to Chevrolet for lending us one hell of a car for our tests.



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TRACK THRASH



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The newest Chevy to show up was the NASCAR-themed 1984 Monte Carlo fielded by Schwartz Performance. It's actually a customer's car, so it was nice that Dan Howe was brave enough to let us beat on it.



Our fifth Nova came to us courtesy of Total Cost Involved (TCI) and belonged to one of their employees, Evan Dalley. This 427 small-block-powered Chevy had only recently been finished, so we give them credit for beating on such a fresh build.



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Our tire sponsor was allowed to bring an entry and they chose the 1965 Corvette owned by Brain Hobaugh. The car is powered by a 364-inch small-block and has been raced in events all over the U.S. It's certainly one sorted ride.



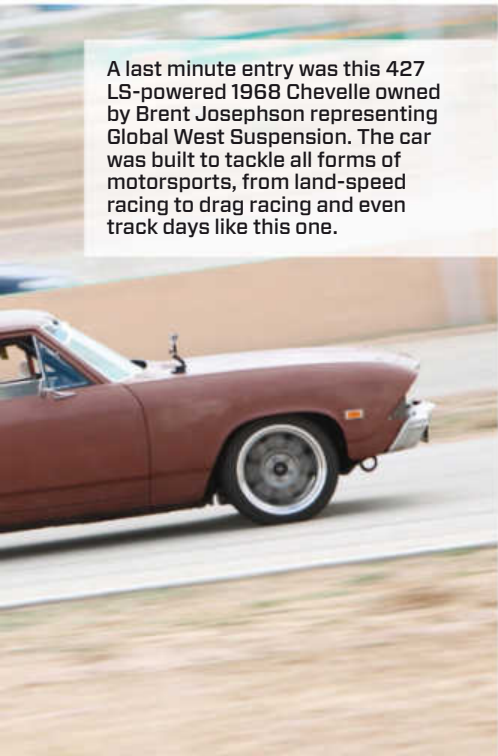


TRACK THRASH

Over the two days of the event, the cars were pushed hard. Aside from a few minor mechanical hiccups, the cars came through with flying colors. On the track we kept "off track excursions" to a minimum, but the drivers ran their machines hard in their efforts to best our 2015 Camaro 1LE. How did they do? Well, you're going to have to wait for us to roll out the results over the next few months. Be sure to keep checking www.superchevy.com for all the latest and for the track video we promised.



A last minute entry was this 427 LS-powered 1968 Chevelle owned by Brent Josephson representing Global West Suspension. The car was built to tackle all forms of motorsports, from land-speed racing to drag racing and even track days like this one.



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TRACK THRASH

THE RUBBER THAT MET THE ROAD

In any driving competition tires are a huge factor in lap times. So, to keep things fair we opted to specify a tire for the event. In this case it was one of our favorites, the Falken Azenis RT615K. The RT615K has become one of the favorite tires of drivers competing in autocross and full-tilt driving events like the Optima Ultimate Street Car

Series – and for good reason, they stick! In fact, many of our competitors were already running this tire prior to the event.

This championship-winning DOT-approved competition street tire has a motorsports-inspired 8/32-inch tread depth while the solid center rib provides significant traction in a straight line while the asymmetric pattern gives tons of lateral grip. The tread compound carries a rating of 200, but what's nice about this tire is they maintain grip even as temperatures increase. The three "high-void" grooves help resist hydroplaning in wet conditions while the massive shoulder-blocks grip hard in the turns. It's a great tire for those who want to drive fast and we were thrilled when Falken signed up to sponsor the event.



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1 RANDY RENSBY 1969 NOVA

Quick Take: Randy Rensby said he bought his 1969 Chevy Nova "with a split bench, 2-speed Powerglide, tired 350 and a sunroof. Over the next dozen years, we've done a complete body and interior restoration, sprayed it 1986 Corvette Torch Flame Red, added a ZZ4 crate 350 full roller with AFR heads, and Performance Distributors' one-wire DUI distributor." The TH400 automatic trans, with a 3,800-stall, is shifted via a B&M ratchet shifter. The diff packs 3.55 gears.

2 JOE PISANO 1972 CHEVELLE

Quick Take: Joe Pisano bought his 1972 Chevelle SS 454 in 1974 from its original owner and turned it into a street/strip car. Factory original with an LS5 and Muncie M22 four-speed, the car now features an automatic trans. Factory options include air conditioning, AM/FM 8-track stereo, as well as power steering and brakes. Joe added a tilt wheel and rear window defroster to the options list.

3 CARLOS ALVARADO 1968 CHEVELLE

Quick Take: Carlos Alvarado said his 1968 Chevelle Malibu SS is a real VIN code 138 car. "It currently has a built L72 427 with a TH400, 3,000-stall converter, all tubular UMI control arms, boxed convertible frame and will enjoy some more Pro Touring-type upgrades in the future."

4 VALENTIN CORONADO 1987 MONTE CARLO

Quick Take: Valentin Coronado said his dad, Hugo Coronado, bought his 1987 Monte Carlo SS Aero Coupe from its original owner when Valentin was 1 year old. When Valentin turned 16, Hugo gave him the Aero Coupe for a birthday present. Originally silver, the Coronados repainted it 2010 Camaro Imperial Blue with a hint of pearl added. The original 305/350 was swapped for a 5.3L LS and 4L65E, built by Gauntt's Transmission of Pasadena, Texas.

5 MARTIE RIPLEY 1963 IMPALA

Quick Take: Martin, or Martie as his friends call him, scored this 1963 Chevy Impala four-door hardtop sports sedan from his father-in-law and spent two years completing a restoration that included paint and freshening up its 283 with a Powerglide automatic transmission. The finishing touch was to dangle a pair of red and white fuzzy dice from the rearview mirror.



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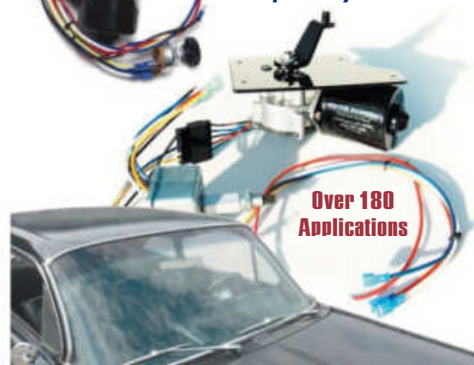
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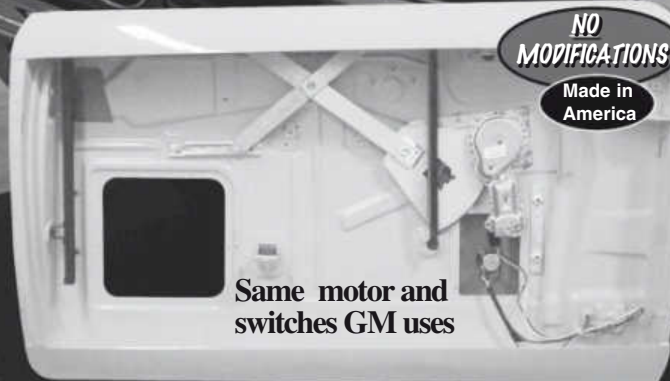
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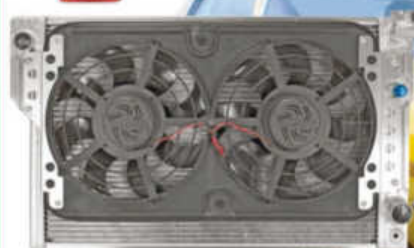


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Direct plug-in cruise control for GM LS drive-by-wire engines is now available from Dakota Digital. The CRC-1000 plugs directly into your OEM LS throttle pedal for not only a simple installation but reliable operation and connectivity. The CRC-1000 obtains its information from the included diagnostic connector and throttle pedal connections, allowing an extremely simple installation for drive-by-wire GM CAN bus V-8 applications from 2006 - current (and 2005 Corvette/GTO).

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800-852-3228
WWW.DAKOTADIGITAL.COM



THROTTLE UP

These throttle cable mounting bracket and spring return kits from Lokar Motorsports are intended for street applications and are available in brushed or black finishes. They include throttle cable and transmission kickdown cable provisions and work with Lokar throttle and kickdown cables. The kits include stainless steel return springs with dual-wound ends for safety and also have adjustable spring tension. They fit most drop-base air cleaners and work with single- or dual-plane intake manifolds.

LOKAR, INC

877-469-7440
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PUT THE HAMMER DOWN

Tired of beating in firewalls to fit a modern HEI distributor? Performance Online's new 1955-'57 Chevy Bel Air motor mount brackets are available in stock location and 3/4-inch forward versions to clear bulkier HEI ignitions. The mounts are available for both small- and big-block engines and can accommodate seamed or seamless frames. Kits include black powdercoated brackets and all attaching hardware.

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BUSHELS OF BUSHINGS

Prothane's new Total suspension kit for fifth-gen Camaros feature specially engineered polyurethane bushings designed to improve handling and provide a more stable and controllable ride. The kit includes bushings and components for front control arms, steering rack, front and rear sway bars, rear control arms, adjustment link, trailing arms, and rear subframe.

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SCENIC VIEW

Spruce up the dash of your 1963-'67 Vette with a new series of UV-resistant ABS panels from Classic Dash. The stock "leather grain" dashpanels can easily be replaced with matte-black, brushed-aluminum, or carbon-fiber finished panels with a choice of 15 Auto Meter or Thunder Road gauge styles that range from high-tech to classic. They are also available plain. The panels come with two 4 5/8-inch openings for a large 5-inch full sweep tachometer and speedometer, plus four 2 1/16-inch apertures for auxiliary gauges.

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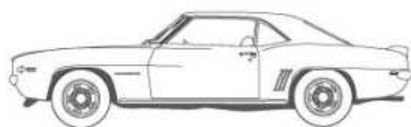
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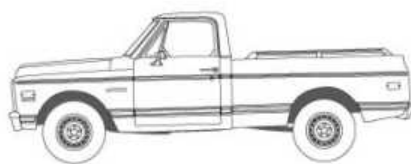
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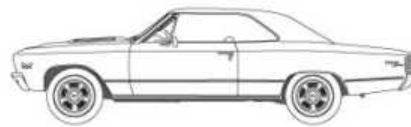
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